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Playful engagements in product design:

**Developing a theoretical framework for ludo-aesthetic
interactions in kitchen appliances**

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Declaration

I composed this thesis and the work is my own. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or qualification.

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Abstract

This research is an investigation into the playful aspects of designed products. Defining playfulness in products, besides and beyond utilitarian functions and aesthetics, is at the heart of this thesis. In product design research, playfulness, this indispensable element of our mediated world, is either superficially limited to visual seduction or entangled with new technologies that it seems as if play appears as peripheral. The main objective of this research, therefore, is to understand how play can be embodied within a product at the design stage.

The research has been supported by a considerable body of literature on the definition of play, product reviews and qualitative fieldwork studies. The fieldwork and ethnographic research was conducted in three stages. First, a series of semi-structured interviews were carried out with second-year product design students at the Edinburgh College of Art. The aim was to examine their understanding of the playful aspects in their own interactive design. The second stage was a series of focus group discussions held with women over the age of 65 to explore how they understand and interpret playfulness in the context of kitchen appliances, and how the change of functions may affect their attitudes toward the activities of their everyday life. Finally, through using a number of ethnographic research methods, five Edinburgh women, aged between 25 and 35, were observed in their kitchens to assess their style of cooking and the way they interacted with their chosen household products.

As a result of these field studies, four main aspects of playfulness in these interactions were discovered: communicative and social aspects, dynamic and bodily engagement, the distractive and immersive quality of play and finally, the ‘self-reflective’ aspects of play. The latter is indebted to the idea of ‘ludification of societies’ proposed by Jos De Mul (2005), who draws attention to the increase of playful activities in Western societies in the 21st century and the emergence of a new state of identity, or ‘ludic identity’. In considering this exploration, I have developed a new framework for the ludo-aesthetics of interaction based on the ‘aesthetics of

interaction’ which aims to explain the deeper meanings of playful engagements in product interactions.

By defining play and reviewing the possibilities of playfulness in products, I have created a taxonomy of playful products, providing a broad spectrum of play, from visually and functionally playful to more subtle and hidden agendas, which only can be highlighted through the active role of users. The findings to emerge from this study are, firstly, playfulness in product design is not an emotion elicited from using a product but rather is a mode, with a broad range of interactions, from objective to subjective, and from personal to social. Second, to assign any attribute of playfulness to a product without considering the contribution of the user, the socio-cultural environment of use and the reflective and constructive interactions of users with products is reductive and superficial. In order to make these findings more tangible for designers and students in product design, I have visualised four food-related scenarios by imaginative personas based on the observations I made in the course of the fieldwork. In addition, I have drawn upon the term ‘replay’ (normally associated with gaming) to demonstrate that playfulness can occur through recalling the objects of the past, the culture of reusing and recycling, and retro style.

In essence, this PhD sets the parameters of what designers should be aware of while dealing with people’s playful interactions with products. It is my belief that such awareness, as a complementary element of aesthetic interactions, will help designers to expand their territory of research and widen their scope for design practices.

Keywords

Emotional design, playful design, playful kitchen appliances, playful interaction, aesthetics of interaction, ludo-aesthetics of interaction, playful and ludic identity, fun-led kitchen.

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1 Introduction

Having studied and taught product design as well as working as a product designer for the last eighteen years, I have gradually become aware of the importance of play as both a research tool and as a quality in products. This awareness intrigued me and I set out to learn more about how playfulness might be manipulated so that it forms an essential part of a product, both to enhance the users' interactions and to be compatible with contemporary socio-cultural changes, such as new debates on identity as a result of new media technologies.

In this thesis, play in the context of functional products becomes the focus of academic research and is explored from several key dimensions. This research will not anticipate solving a problem, testing out a theory, or generalising an issue. Rather, my main objective is to understand how play can become an essential part of a product, what the users' role is in this scenario, and how playful artefacts can contribute to cultural transformation of ludification (De Mul, 2005).

Most studies in the field of playful product design have only focussed on the emotional aspects of products or have failed to identify and explain the broad range of characteristics of play in designed products. This area of research is in need of more attention as Western societies are increasingly exposed to the cultural phenomena of playfulness. It was also evident to me that new and current research into play has the ability to enrich the discipline of product design in terms of definition, new terminology and the making of new frameworks for developing playful ideas.

The research undertaken for this thesis covers both the areas where one might expect to find an element of playful practice in product design: academia and the marketplace. In addition, it also investigates playful products in the work of independent designers and artists, in domestic contexts and in the use of such products in households in the UK. Moreover, in addition to the clear focus on play, the research simultaneously works to develop a theoretical framework for playful interactions in order to explore in detail and evaluate the beauty and value of playful engagements with products. In this thesis I argue that whilst playfulness is a

generally accepted element for many designers, the aesthetic possibilities are often overlooked. These possibilities are either superficially limited to visual seduction and the so called ‘eye candy’ effect (Norman, 2004) or so implicit that they can be understood only by interpretation and justification. Thus, I examine the broad range of playfulness in product design, beginning by questioning its cultural context, and examining the extent to which the newly emerging philosophical debates about play have been adopted and adapted.

1.1 Playful interactions and product design

In 1938, the Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga (1872-1945) introduced a new species, *homo ludens* – ‘man the player’ or the ‘playing man’ (Huizinga, 1949). Huizinga, in his seminal book, *Homo ludens: a study of the play-element in culture*, acknowledged play as a crucial part in the culture and construction of civilisations (Huizinga, 1949). Following this, many scholars in philosophy and the humanities have further developed his idea. However, it was only in the 21st century that the term *homo ludens* has been used in order to explain the newly emerging cultural phenomena of ‘playful’ or ‘ludic identity’ (De Mul, 2005; Raessens, 2006; De Lange, 2010). Following Huizinga’s idea, Brian Sutton-Smith (1924-), a New Zealand psychologist and play theorist, prophesised a ‘ludic turn’ in Western culture in 1997 (Sutton-Smith, 1997). The ‘ludic turn’ appeared later in 2005 as the ‘ludification of societies’ by Dutch philosopher Jos De Mul. According to De Mul and his followers, the playful construction of identity in humans is a result of recent changes in societies and the growing influence of developments in media technologies. De Mul’s ‘ludification of societies’ (De Mul, 2005) populates society with individuals who are not fixed in their presumed and predefined definitions of self, but on the contrary, who actively construct and reconstruct their identity simply through the way they consume new media and engage with what the new technologies allow them to be, virtually and non-virtually (De Mul, 2005).

In the discipline of product design, the concept of *homo ludens* reappeared in an article by William Gaver, Professor of Design at Goldsmiths University of London, entitled ‘Designing for homo ludens’ (2002). In this article, he illustrates a new

design approach for people who are no longer in search of pure functionality and utilitarian values in design, but rather are searching for a playful approach that leaves room for critique and self-reflection.

The playfulness, which I address in this thesis, has its roots in De Mul and Gaver's studies on the fluid quality of the definition of self and self-reflection in using artefacts and new technologies. In line with Sutton-Smith, who believes a ludic turn in literature and art was manifest at the end of twentieth century as opposed to aesthetic turn at the end of eighteenth century (Sutton-Smith, 1997, pp.143-144), I argue that the ludic turn should be a serious concern in the design process and be considered beyond aesthetic agendas in product design. I use the notion of the ludification of societies and other features of playfulness to expand one of the current frameworks in explaining users' interactions with products, the 'aesthetics of interaction' (AoI)¹ (Hummels, 2000; Hummels et al., 2001; Hummels and Overbeeke, 2010; Overbeeke et al., 2004). A critical approach to this and similar frameworks demonstrates the necessity for an academic study to be undertaken in order to explore the potential of play, its broad range of expression, its value and beauty, and thus, to define playful engagements in the discipline of product design.

As a product designer, I establish in this study how, by acknowledging the importance of the issue of play in a dynamic and ever-changing environment such as the kitchen, the discipline of product design can be enhanced; and as one of the agents of problem-solving in society it can serve more people more effectively. By promoting play in products, designers will be able to address contemporary dilemmas and difficulties, such as wellbeing, communication and sustainability. For the purpose of this research, playfulness in a series of student projects from the

¹ Throughout this thesis, the abbreviation AoI is used to refer to the Aesthetics of Interaction, LAoI for Ludo-Aesthetics of Interaction, and AI for Aesthetic Interaction.

product design programme at the Edinburgh College of Art were studied, and the link between playfulness and communicative design ideas was explored. After that, the practice of cooking and eating at home between two groups of Edinburgh residents, young professional females between 25 and 35 and older females above 65, was investigated and four scenarios for playfully engaging designs were developed.

1.2 Research questions, arguments and aims

In my pursuit of playfulness in product design, the main research question is: *How do playful engagements in product design contribute to the 'ludification of societies'?*

Of secondary interest to this is the question of how the ludification of societies contributes to playful engagement in product design. By posing these questions, I set out to explore the extent to which people engage with playful designed products and how they use them in their everyday life. By referring to the thesis of the 'ludification of societies', this research examines the role and position of product design in this scenario.

In addition, this study aims to address the following research questions:

- What are the objective and subjective elements that make an artefact playful?

The different factors that make an artefact playful, playable and ultimately render it as re-playable (playable again and again) will be considered.

- What is the role of users in the playability and re-playability of an artefact?

How do the terms 'playability' and 're-playability', which are constantly used in video game studies, help to define some of the concepts that are already used in playful products and how do users become part of these concepts and contribute to my exploration of playful products and the construction of playful interactions with products?

- What is the relationship between functionality (utilitarian functions) and playability in kitchen appliances?

The relationship between function and play in playful objects appears to be very complex, as play is considered to be in opposition to serious functions. How designers in the last three decades have presented the relationship between form and play, function and play and the meaning of playfulness in artefacts will be a crucial element in this critical thinking.

- How can existing design frameworks, such as the ‘aesthetics of interaction’ (AoI) be useful in describing the playful aspects of products?

One of the aims of this research is to examine the adequacy of the current frameworks used in product design to define the playfulness interaction. In this section, I will argue that there is a beauty in playful interactions with a transcendental and enriching quality that one could not find in the beauty perceived in the form of the objects.

Whilst adopting beliefs in the AoI by Dutch design scholars at Eindhoven University of Technology, Caroline Hummels and Kees Overbeeke (1952-2011), I also argue that it is essential that this approach is critically examined to satisfy whether their idea does indeed fully convey the beauty of playfulness. By considering the emerging ludic culture of today and assessing the human being as *homo ludens*, I aim to develop a corresponding framework to understand, analyse and design playful products. The ludo-aesthetics of interactions (LAoI) is a framework that will help designers to enhance society’s material culture and lead to new products - playful products.

Over the course of this research, I have become aware of further questions which I believe need to be asked with respect to the role of play in encouraging greater public engagement with sustainability alongside associated health and wellbeing. However, such issues are beyond the bounds of this PhD research but nonetheless, it is clear that an enquiry into the relationship between playability and sustainability and how playability leads us to sustainability is a crucial next step in this theme.

The four questions set out above permeate this thesis. My main argument is that users have a significant role in defining playfulness in a product, and so, by assigning any attribute of play to a product without considering the users, their cultural

background, or their skills and experiences, is misguided and ensures that the designer will fall short of the product achieving its maximum potential. As playful products with different intentions start to make their way into current material culture, they influence users, and the user, as *homo ludens*, influences the products in return. Secondly, I argue that the current so-called holistic approaches to design practices, such as AoI, do not provide an exclusive definition of playfully designed artefacts: by modifying or rearticulating such existing concepts, I intend to introduce a new territory for designers, design critics and scholars.

Thus, a key aim of this study is to develop a future framework of LAoI to give credit to the playful quality of products through the acknowledgement of the users' role. I do not claim that this framework defines all aspects of playful interactions, but nonetheless, it will provide an important outline by which to understand those interactions, and to define and use them in product design. In other words, this framework aims to present the power of play in product design and promote the role of users with regard to the socio-cultural context of use in interactions with products. In short, the aims of this research are as follows:

- To match and align design practices with the current social and cultural phenomena and understandings.
- To emphasise the value of play in our life and use its potential for introducing a new territory for design practices.
- To develop a framework that can explain playful engagements with products.

1.3 Approach and outline

The research undertaken for this study embraces a range of qualitative research methods including focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, ethnographic interviews, and video ethnography. Moreover, studies of play, a contextual background on play in product design and research into the design and use of home and kitchen appliances have contributed significantly to the development of my thoughts and the proposal of LAoI. The kitchen was chosen as the field of study for this research mainly because of its cultural significance: it is a space well-suited to the study of identities, since it affords both a state of playfulness and serious matters. Moreover, many design endeavours focus on kitchen appliances and settings. I will

expand the main reasons for my choice of the kitchen in a separate section later in this chapter.

This thesis consists of six chapters, including this introductory chapter. In Chapter 2, recent studies on the history of play and a selection of definitions on play have been provided. In addition, the chapter explores the different explanations and theoretical dimensions of the research, and provides reviews on how other design scholars and critics have approached play. At the end, the taxonomy of playful artefacts is introduced, which is based on product reviews. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used for this study and provides an overview of the different methods undertaken in order to collect data. Chapter 4 analyses the results of interviews and focus group discussions undertaken during the course of this research. It begins with analysis of data gathered in the students' design project at the Edinburgh College of Art, followed by an analysis of focus group discussions with the older women and finally, the chapter explores the ethnographic data acquired from the discussion with the young females aged 25 to 35, which is the main concern of this study. These findings are discussed in Chapter 5, 'Where play fits in'. The chapter argues the main aspects of playfulness extracted from the field studies. In addition, it explains four parameters that the new design framework of LAoI consists of. LAoI is a new reading of AoI through the lens of playfulness. Chapter 5 concludes with four different design scenarios inspired by the communities that were studied through the course of research in Edinburgh with the aim of understanding the users' needs and the possible settings for such proposed playful interactions. Finally, Chapter 6, the conclusion, summarises the main findings of this research including a discussion on the limitation of this study and areas for further research.

Product design today and the topic of play

Design practices, both in academia and in the marketplace, claim to embrace play and encourage emotional and playful aspects in the design of products. However, they are each following different directions to pursue and define play. For example, in the course of this research I encountered design exhibitions and university projects where play is allocated solely to toy design and the investigation of children's needs,

such as the Toy Design Lab, School of Design, at Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The other main trend at university level can be observed in Goldsmiths University of London or the Royal College of Art where more room is devoted to the development of open-ended artefacts that are characterised as playful. In retail outlets, from small stores to big shopping centres, one can see shelves of toy-like and ‘playful’ artefacts which aim to seduce customers into purchasing them in the hope of adding a sense of playfulness to their intended functional use. These examples demonstrate that play can be used to substantiate different concepts and can be articulated through a variety of ideas. The comparison of these contexts does not provide a coherent contribution to the understanding of playfulness; the academic approach is abstract and implicit and often entangled with studies on new technologies, whilst the retail bias is too superficial and explicit. As a result, it is crucial to question what designers truly mean when they claim to create playful products. What do users understand from such artefacts? The current opacity of meaning suggests that playfulness in product design needs to be further defined in order for it to be appropriately used by designers and thus, beneficial for the user.

When it comes to identifying playful products, one might cite objects such as *The Donkey Cigarette Dispenser* (Figure 1-1) or *The Hen Egg Cooker* (Figure 1-2) as obvious signifiers of playfulness. Such identifications were the initial reaction to my research topic and appeared during my everyday conversations with people and their understanding of playful products or practices.



Figure 1-1: The Donkey Cigarette Dispenser



Figure 1-2: The Maverick Henrietta Hen Egg Cooker

On a more professional level, among design researchers, during casual talks in conferences and symposia, some of the kitchen utensils by Alessi, the Italian company, were occasionally mentioned as the ultimate playful design. Products such as ‘Mangiauovo’, the Alessi egg cup by Guido Venturini (Figure 1-3) from the ‘Family Follows Fiction’ (Alessi, 1998) series or ‘Anna G.’, the corkscrew by Alessandro Mendini were considered as playful. These observations caused me to question why playfulness is so frequently reduced to this visual seduction and is superficially limited to visual engagements.

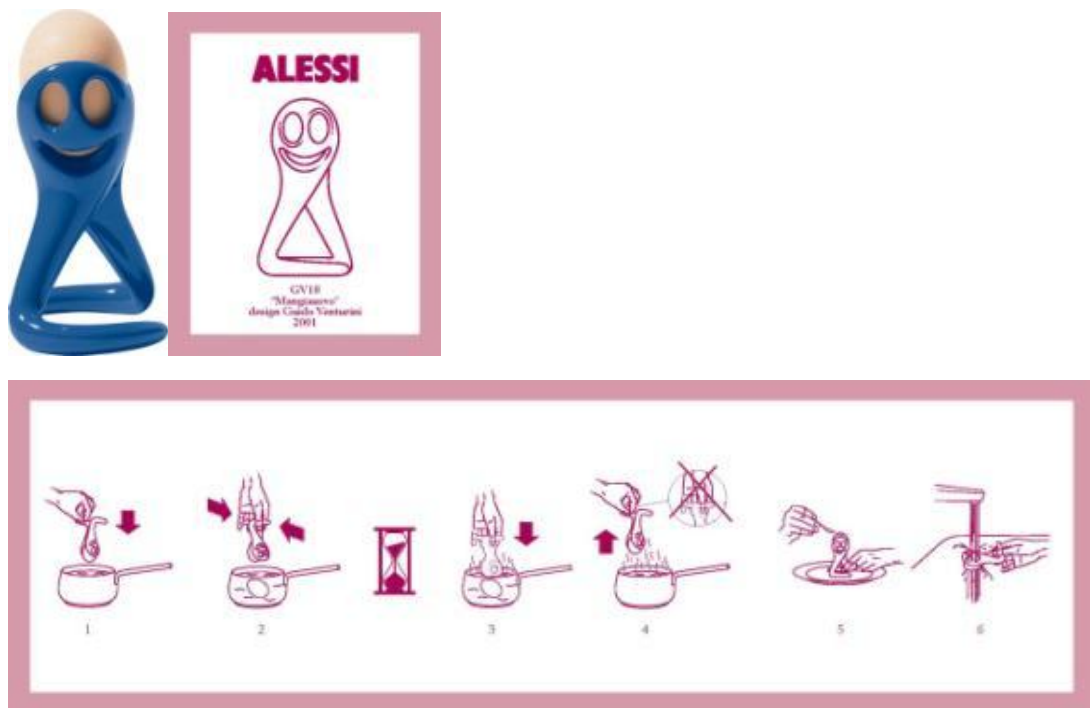


Figure 1-3: Mangiauovo, Alessi Egg Cup/Egg Catcher by Guido Venturini (2001)

These examples suggest a tangible playful quality in the visual appearance of the products. However, in pursuing the territory of play in product design, one would quickly find that play is not limited to an objective quality. The concept of play can, in contrast, be just as subjective and intangible. Take, for instance, *The Alphabet Fridge Magnet* (Figure 1-4), the experience of assembling IKEA furniture or *The History Tablecloth* (Figure 1-5). Refrigerator magnets in different forms and content appeared in the kitchens of a number of households I visited throughout my studies. Whilst most of their designs present advertisements or the image of a place, a motto, or a national symbol of a country, *The Alphabet Fridge Magnet* and similar ideas, such as poetry magnets, illustrate a personal and creative usage of the refrigerator's door. These magnets provide a situation provoking playful behaviours individually or collectively. Similarly, assembling an IKEA piece of furniture can be entertaining as well as playful, as it might bring together members of a family, make a memorable moment and initiate a creative ground for trial and error. Another example with a more abstract playful meaning is *The History Tablecloth* which was developed at Goldsmiths Interaction Research Studio, Goldsmiths University of London, as part of the Equator Project¹. This tablecloth was made using an electroluminescent material and was designed so that a lace-like pattern is illuminated beneath an object after it has been on the tablecloth for a period of time. This reflection disappears gradually after the object is removed. This artefact evokes a sense of playfulness which cannot be easily articulated.



Figure 1-4: The Alphabet Fridge Magnet

¹ A six-year interdisciplinary research collaboration, funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)



Figure 1-5: The History Tablecloth as part of the Equator Project (2002)

According to Gaver, playfulness in such examples:

provoke[s] people to think about how they use their homes ... People might be reminded to tidy up more often, but equally they might simply enjoy the patterns that emerge when things are left on the table over time. *The Tablecloth* doesn't dictate people's reactions or suggest what activities they might pursue. It isn't for anything, and that's the point. It simply creates a situation that is novel and potentially significant, and leaves people to find their own meaning within it (Gaver, in press).

There is an intriguing element of playfulness in all the above examples, either due to their toy-like shapes or their interactive engagements. They have the ability to make the viewer smile, take them back to their childhood, or perhaps distract the viewer from reality and invite them into an interior world of fantasy. As well as emotional and cognitive responses, the concept of play can be related to other territories, such as semiotics, the meanings of product, functionality and utility. To successfully define the playful elements in design that, so far, has not been academically pursued, it is first necessary to deal with this broader definition of playfulness. As noted, there are both objective and subjective elements in the playful interaction people share with products, which need to be addressed. Over the last century, product design aimed not just to make economically convincing products which optimise utilitarian functions in recognisable aesthetic dimensions, but has also attempted to address modern principles and desires. In this thesis, I intend to argue that 21st century product design should embrace a wider range of playful approaches which engages with contemporary issues such as the pursuit of happiness and wellbeing,

environmental concerns, the pervasive emerging information and communication technologies, through the application of playful approaches.

Playful design approaches fall under a range of headings from ‘User-Centred Design’ (Norman and Draper, 1986) ‘Alternative Design’ (Nieusma, 2004) to ‘Interaction Design’ (Moggridge, 2006), or ‘Critical Design’(Dunne, 1999), just to mention a few. There is little doubt that product designers and critics are keen to expand the discipline’s boundaries by reflecting on broader possibilities within the realm of play. For the purpose of this research, I will focus on evaluating these playful practices and their promotional value in design.

Why the topic of play is important

In recent years, concern has grown about the application of play and game elements to real-life goals and tasks. As a result, academic disciplines have demonstrated an increasing interest in play, from psychology (Else, 2009) and sociology studies (Gauntlett, 2008), to developmental studies and management (Pink, 2005), education (Hughes, 2001) and computer game studies (Dovey and Kennedy, 2006; Raessens, 2006). Such studies mainly emphasise the importance of play and embrace the benefits of play in everyday life. In his book, *A New Whole Mind* (2005), Daniel Pink explains how the ethos of the work environment in companies such as the Ford Motor Company has been changed since the 1930s. He quotes David Collinson, the British management scholar:

In 1940 John Gallo was sacked because he was ‘caught in the act of smiling,’ after having committed an earlier breach of ‘laughing with the other fellows,’ and ‘slowing down the line maybe half a minute.’ This tight managerial discipline reflected the overall philosophy of Henry Ford, who stated that ‘When we are at work we ought to be at work. When we are at play we ought to be at play. There is no use trying to mix the two. (Pink, 2005, p.187)

Whilst Henry Ford was implementing his rigid ideas about work, Huizinga was developing the idea of *homo ludens*. He believed that humankind can be defined by its playful characteristics and that many of its cultural rituals and practices are rooted in play (Huizinga, 1949). His idea of *homo ludens* is increasingly being used today

and has found relevance in many disciplines, particularly in computer game studies. From mobile phones to video games and virtual networking, scholars in search of the playful characteristics of such phenomena are beginning to acknowledge Huizinga's ideas and as a result, the boundaries of the study of play widen into different domains. The concept of *homo ludens* draws the attention of many social researchers and philosophers in such a way that some scholars herald the 'ludification of societies' and the emergence of new kinds of identities called 'playful or ludic identity' (De Mul, 2005).

A striking example of the use of play can be found in a study of social identity by British media researcher David Gauntlett (2008). He asked the participants to make metaphorical models of their identities in Lego (Gauntlett, 2008). In his study of personal identity, he explored people's everyday creativity via playing with Lego and in this way, for the first time, playing with Lego became a tool with which to assess the individual's social world.

Scholars such as Pink, in line with other contemporary scholars in psychology (Else, 2009) and anthropology, emphasise the necessity of recognising play not only as a domain of childhood but also one of adulthood, and not just as a medium for fun and entertainment but as an essential part of everyday life. 'Playing at work is not just useful; it's essential' (Shute, 2009). Pink states:

Play is becoming an important part of work, business, and personal wellbeing, its importance manifesting itself in three ways: games, humour, and joyfulness. Games, particularly computer and video games, have become a large and influential industry that is teaching whole-minded lessons to its customers and recruiting a new breed of whole-minded worker. Humour is showing itself to be an accurate marker for managerial effectiveness, emotional intelligence, and the thinking style characteristic of the brain's right hemisphere. And joyfulness, as exemplified by unconditional laughter, is demonstrating its power to make us more productive and fulfilled. (Pink, 2005, p.188)

The manifestation of such thoughts about work and play can be observed in Google's approach to the design of its work spaces. As part of my research, I visited the

Google London HQ in July 2012. There I encountered a working environment which included pleasurable and playful interior designs at the offices and departments for a community of co-workers, who use collaboration to inspire innovation. There was no trace of the typical formal office interiors and the layout generally initiated an informal interaction with furniture and people. Although according to the staff, they were accustomed to the environment and it loses its initial attraction after a while, the general ambience of it is a creative setting which conveys joyfulness and exuberance. Playfulness is applied to the design of the forms, colours and functions of appliances throughout the headquarters. Many corners and corridors are decorated with boards and stationary devices to record thoughts and creative ideas. A table tennis table and a football game stand just beside the working area and desktops. It was clear that Google is a pioneer in promoting a holistic playful corporate identity, from the design of its website, search engine and customer support, to the office layouts and attention to their employees' needs.



Figure 1-6: Google London HQ

Pat Kane (1964-), musician and author of *The Play Ethics: A Manifesto for a Different Way of Living* (Kane, 2004), and Perry Else, author of *The Value of Play* (2009) similarly indicate that 'play will be to the 21st century what work was to the last 300 years of industrial society; our dominant way of knowing, doing and

creating value.’ (Kane, 2004, p.63; Pink, 2005, p.193; Else, 2009, p.152). This 180 degree turn, from the Fordist ethos toward work and play to this inviting world of play in Pink and Kane’s works, is less than a century old. This explanation of play as something inseparable from everyday life is relatively new to scholars and designers. I find Pink and Kane’s approach crucial to the development of new products; my own research attempts to follow a similar perspective by acknowledging the necessity of play in designing everyday artefacts and enriching the interactions between the users and products.

Contextualising playful products

Playful design is explored in this research within the cultural context of everyday life and follows the argument that engagements in product design are linked to the idea of the ‘ludification of societies’. Historically, product design, as the descendant of the Industrial Revolution, has tried to be responsive to socio-cultural changes and needs. For instance, in the United Kingdom, as the middle class grew in the nineteenth century and their capacity to consume increased, a need for more manufactured goods compatible with the newly emerged tastes was formed. As a result, design in advertisements, packaging, department stores and shop windows, as well as products, became necessary (Sparke, 2004, pp.14-15), while the instrumental purpose to encourage more consumption cannot be denied. Penny Sparke, Professor of Design History, Kingston University, London, believes that societal changes and design continued to affect each other, during and after the First World War, for example, in the form of the reconstruction of national identity through product design. This procedure to design a nationalistic identity led to what we know as British, German, Italian design and the like (Sparke, 2004, pp.95-97, 112).

After the Second World War, design was used to shape more individual and group identities mostly in the form of consumption, ‘Americanisation’ and ‘a further democratisation of the expression of taste’ (Sparke, 2004, p.117). Design began to pay attention to more individual needs and desires and including the ‘satisfaction value’ besides ‘utility value’ (Heskett, 1980, p.143). Subsequently, in the 1960s, postmodern movements in response to the failure of modernism began to emerge,

and product design aligned with other design professions played a significant role in shaping the environment and culture of the time.

Designers such as Ettore Sottsass (1917-2007), the Italian avant-garde designer, changed the appearance of products to match with the visually saturated culture of the society. Although his response is now considered by critics to have been ahead of his time, its influence today can be traced in the playful shapes of many products such as Alessi's. Sottsass believed that, 'because we already consume so much imagery through photography, television, magazines, film and the like, and so fast, we need to produce stronger stimuli, more concentrated, more rapid, more complex' (Ramakers and Bakker, 1998, p.31). His response to the dominant visual culture of his time was to form Memphis¹, a radical design movement which is known as postmodern design now and put a lot of emphasis on visual stimulation and decorative figures in products.

Following such endeavours in design, Alessi, which recruited some of the Memphis designers of that time, is now claiming that they have promoted playful culture through some of their projects, most evidently in their collaboration with Philips in 1994 and the 'Family Follows Fiction' project. Based on two main theories, 'Transitional Objects' (Winnicott, 1990; Alessi, 1998) and 'Affective Codes' (Alessi, 1998), Alberto Alessi (1946-), company manager, explains the company's 'beyond functionality' (Alessi, 1998) approach to design. The idea of Transitional Objects was put forward by the English psychologist, Donald Woods Winnicott (1896-1971), at the same time as 'Affective Codes' was promoted as the thesis of the Italian psychologist, Franco Fornari (1921-85).

Winnicott identified in human existence an unknown zone between things perceived and things conceived. This he called 'the area of transitional phenomena', an area

¹ Memphis was a radical movement in product design in the 1980s founded by avant-garde Italian designers such as Ettore Sottsass, Andrea Branzi and Alessandro Mendini. (FIELL, C. & FIELL, P. 2005. *Design of the 20th century*, Koln, London, Taschen.

populated by games, teddy bears, things that remind people of their childhood and safety (Gabra-Liddell, 1994) (Alessi, 1998, p. 22). According to him, Transitional Objects are the first objects a baby experiences such as a teddy bear or blanket. These objects gradually take him/her to the reality of life and are the first signs of experiencing the self as a separated identity from the mother. This separateness and reunion with the mother is essential in shaping the child's identity. However, Winnicott pinpointed that this process happens through play, play between the individual body and the object. By this definition, Winnicott expanded the cultural role of play put forward by Freud. 'Freud regarded play as the means by which the child accomplishes his first great cultural and psychological achievements' (Bettelheim, 1987).

Affective codes identify two kinds of meaning present in language: 'The state of the day', in control of reasoning and functions and the 'state of night', bound up with fantasy and emotion. Fornari believed that our choices in life are almost always ruled by the state of night (Alessi SPA, 1998, p.22). Fantasy has been given a privilege and is believed to reinforce the emotional decision-making process.

Alessi's toy-shaped and playful artefacts developed according to both of these theories and are essentially the extension of the safety and happiness of our childhood, suggesting fantasy and supplying emotional connections to objects in our daily life. Beyond functionality, in fact, is a transformation of objects 'from simple kitchen tools to ... objects of affections that talk directly to the child that is still living inside each adult' (Verganti, 2008).

This argument, along with Huizinga's idea on play, emphasises again the importance of considering the human being as *homo ludens* and the role of play in cultural experiences. The previously mentioned series of Alessi's products demonstrates how product design can develop around psychological and social debates (Alessi's playful products aim to enhance the ludic culture surrounding the product and the user).

One aim of this research is to study the manifestation of ludic culture in Western societies through material culture, since the relationship between society and product

design is an intertwined one. Social needs and changes can be conveyed in products and, equally, products can influence some socio-cultural changes. For example, in their seminal book, cultural researchers Paul du Gay, Stuart Hall, Linda Janes and Hugh Mackay demonstrate how the Sony Walkman influenced the cultural behaviour of a generation in the 1980s and can, in itself, provide an insight for social and cultural researchers (Du Gay et al., 2000).

In a similar vein, recently, media researchers Larrisa Hjorth, Jean Burgess and Ingrid Richardson explored the cultural impact of the iPhone as mobile media in their study, *Studying mobile media: cultural technologies, mobile communication, and the iPhone* (Hjorth et al., 2012). Like the Walkman of the 1980s, the iPhone symbolises notions of identity, individualism and lifestyle. It represents mobile media and indicates consumer culture and networked communication in the 21st century. In addition, mobile media as a broader domain was studied by Michiel de Lange, the media researcher. He demonstrated through his PhD dissertation, *Moving circles: mobile media and playful identities*, how mobile media give a ludic or playful character to part of our social communication and on varied levels (De Lange, 2010).

Considering this mutual relationship between society and design, the notion of ‘play’ in the works of Gaver, should also be acknowledged. In his article, ‘*Designing for homo ludens*’ (2002), he is one of the first to identify ludic culture in design and demonstrates how design can be an appropriate response to the need for play in Western societies. Since 2000, Gaver and his colleagues in the ‘Interaction Research Studio’ have followed several projects to question the dominant culture of design practices, with the aim of enhancing the life of the end-users. Although most of their ideas are technology-based, they often seek to merge creative designs with the vital issue of wellbeing. In other words, by taking advantage of the new media technology and acknowledging the ludic culture of the time, they try to introduce new products that benefit different sectors of societies, from lone individuals to families, and from nuns to corporate society.

For example, *The Plane Tracker* (Figure 1-7), presented at the 2003 *Curious Home Exhibition* in London, is one in a series of design prototypes called Threshold

Devices. Basically, it is a television-shaped device to track airplanes flying over your house. It decodes radio signals from passing aircraft and uses the information to create imagined flights around the globe (derived from GoogleEarth). Once a plane is located, a person can follow it on its monitor through Google Maps to its destination.



Figure 1-7: The Plane Tracker, exhibited at the Curious Home Exhibition in London (2003)

During the deployment of the product, the designers found that it transmitted very different meanings and uses, from entertainment to environmental awareness. Gaver and his colleagues state that ‘Threshold devices look out from the home, gathering information from its surroundings to suggest how *here* is connected to and situated within a *there*.’ (Gaver et al., 2008) Gaver believes that technology can bring us more than comfort and ease, and that ‘we need to stop designing technology that tells us what to do and who to be (Gaver, in press) instead ‘we should give people the ability to own technology, to bring it into their own complex life stories’ (Gaver, 2002). His statements on technology and its connection to our life stories connect his ludic approaches to the issue of identity. In a more direct statement, he explains how experiencing such objects can be constructive:

[These objects are] pleasurable to experience, but it should be clear that they go beyond mere entertainment. Each raises issues and asks questions, ranging from the effects of pervasive electromagnetic communication, to possibilities for inter-generational communication, to the ethics of taming nature, the value of getting lost, or the status of psychic or spiritual experiences. They raise these issues, but don’t provide answers. Instead, they offer ways for people to experience life from new perspectives, thereby testing hypotheses about *who we might be* or what we might care about. They hint at possibilities for technologies that we

could use in our everyday life, not to accomplish well-defined tasks, but to expand in undefined directions. Open-ended and personal, they encourage us to play – seriously – with experiences, ideas and other people (Gaver, 2002).

This passage tackles the concept of personal identity especially when he is questioning ‘who we might be or what we might care about’. His ‘ludic’ design objects could be a challenge for constructing identities as they leave room for personal reflection and interpretation. In his later article, *Curious things for curious people* (Gaver, in press), Gaver benefits again from Huizinga and Sutton-Smith’s definition of play, emphasising *humo ludens* and the ambiguity of play (1997). However, what he tries to articulate is much closer to De Mul’s reflective quality of play - a sort of play that nourishes our identity. De Mul believes:

Human identity is not a homogeneous, self-contained entity, hidden in the depths of our inner self, but is actively constructed in a social world with the aid of various expressions, such as speech acts, consumer goods, cultural and technological artefacts, social institutions, and (life) stories. These expressions not only mediate between us and our world (referentiality), and between us and our fellow man (communicability), but also between us and ourselves (self-understanding). Consequently, changes in expressions reflect changes in the relationship between us and our world, our social relationships, and our self-conception (De Mul, 2005).

These two statements, one in reference to product design and the other to philosophy, introduce a new perspective to the world of artefacts. Both researchers share the belief that the relationship between the user and the artefacts can be perceived as positively active and constructive. Playful products in the work of Gaver and his followers open discussions on identity, ambiguity, communication and creativity, with a very implicit reference to a definition of play. This is especially apparent when he proposes the creation of a ‘suggestive media’. He notes:

The first is to create ‘suggestive media’ – suggestive in that they are designed to encourage or impel ludic activity, and media in that they are tools through which people experience, create, or communicate freely. The second is to employ ambiguity at all phases of design. Contrary to traditional thinking about interaction, ambiguity is an invaluable tool

because it allows people to find their own meaning in uncertain situations. Used in design processes, concepts and products, ambiguity gives space for people to intermesh their own stories with those hinted at by technologies (Gaver, in press).

He effectively uses different definitions of play, such as ambiguity and the role of the player/user, to explain a necessity for an evolution in product design approaches and processes. However, he does not provide an explicit framework for playful design that gives inclusive insight into the broad role of play. Moreover, play for him is a medium through which to criticise and raise awareness of a change of perspective. Thus, he hesitates to explain the entertainment value and advantage of such designs and other designs known as playful. Further, his study does not include a user's account of playfulness and their definition of play and being playful. Hence, I believe, the role of play in his works stays peripheral.

All in all, play studies and current approaches to emotional design, critical design, and interaction design do not fully convey playful interactions with artefacts. Despite all these practical efforts, the issue of play, in all its dimensions, in product design has been left untouched, academically. A holistic and inclusive study on playful design does not yet exist. Play in product design needs to be articulated properly, with more focus on qualities of play and its importance in the current socio-cultural stage. Playfulness in a product's design can be considered as a part of its 'affordance' (Gibson, 1979; Norman, 2004) and not necessarily as an intentional result of the designer's output. In my study, a broad range of literature was examined to pin down the definition of play and demonstrate its importance in everyday life in order to enrich designers' understanding of play.

Another advantage to the discipline of product design, demonstrated in the recent studies on play, is the development and expansion of play terminology. Terms such as 'playability' and 're-playability' have emerged from game studies, for example, and can help explain some of the users' interactions with playful objects. Such terminology can enrich the discussion of play in product design.

Since the introduction of AoI in 2000, several projects in universities throughout Europe, mostly in the Netherlands, have been developed. For example, in the Department of Industrial Design at both Delft and Eindhoven University of Technology, various student projects have attempted to explain the different aspects of utilitarian functions and emotional functions in search of a beauty that arises not just from the appearance of an object, but also during interactions with multiple aspects of it. In line with these studies, this academic research expands AoI to a more inclusive framework for designers. I have considered AoI as an appropriate approach to study playfulness in products. However, focusing on LAoI in my research aims to define the different aspects of good design, and illustrates the broad range of users' interactions with products through playful engagements. Accordingly, play will not be reduced to a few positive emotions superficially presented in some of the Alessi designs but include the other constructive characteristics of play such as creativity, openness and its interpretive quality. This will be a change in design orientation to match with the emerging culture of ludic activities and the current media-oriented culture of our time.

Why the kitchen

I have chosen the kitchen as the location of my fieldwork because I believe this room is pivotal for both domestic and cultural issues. According to Andrea Branzi, the Italian architect and product designer, the 'post-industrial society and the electronic revolution will lead to more and more time being spent at home, time for working, studying and living. The domestic dwelling will become central to our lives' (Branzi and Branzi, 1987). After more than two decades since he made this statement, this centralisation of domestic life has not happened for the majority of people in Western societies. However, developments in new media and communication technologies have led to new behavioural and cultural changes which make that situation more conceivable. For example, the purpose of commuting and going out has changed during the last two decades. With new media networking, the individual can simply connect to friends and family, or manage her/his work assignments without actually being present in the work environment or in the same space as friends or family.

Banking and shopping can be done easily online. All can be done whilst watching a TV programme or managing domestic chores.

The kitchen, therefore, as a hub for such activities, is receiving more attention, especially in societies which often refer to it as the heart of the home. For British people, the kitchen is the hub or heart of the house where the hearth used to be placed (Mielke, 2004, Freeman, 2004). Elizabeth Shove, sociologist, in her book, *The Design of Everyday Life*, 2007, mentioned that kitchens or parts of them are renovated every seven years in the UK. The kitchen is often refurbished to fit with modern technologies and new trends. This investment reflects a huge part of people's consumption and expenditure and has implications for product designers both in product design and interiors (Shove, 2007).

Reviewing the history of the kitchen demonstrates that it has always been affected by socio-cultural changes, such as Modernist attitudes or the Feminist movement. Technology, innovation and design have also had a profound effect on the meaning of the kitchen through time. Once it was shaped around the hearth of the house as a multi-purpose room, developing in the 19th and 20th centuries as an optimal 'meal machine' (Freeman, 2004) and gradually, with the disappearance of servants in the late 20th century, the kitchen became a more personal room with one of its functions being to represent an individual's identity.

The kitchen is the place where meals are prepared and as a result, many cultural activities can be observed there. What we cook, how we cook, who cooks, how we store the food and preserve it and how we eat, all indicate the kitchen as a culturally specific location which makes this research viable. In addition, in cultural studies, the kitchen, as a part of the house, is a place where gender (Miller, 2010, p.90), social class, family status, wealth, and beliefs have been studied, whether through an actual observation, or by the way it is presented in cultural products such as in movies, literature (Freeman, 2004) or advertisements. Kitchens have even been at the core of political debates at some points in history. In 1959, American Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Union leader Nikita Khrushchev had a debate at the American National Exhibition in Moscow, known as the *Kitchen debate* and agreed that it

should be broadcast simultaneously in America and the Soviet Union (Steel, 2011, p.193).

How the people of a nation feed themselves has been the focus of debate since the 18th century. Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (1755-1826), the French lawyer who was one of the first to write about gastronomy, noted: ‘The destiny of nations depends upon the manner in which they feed themselves’ (Honoré, 2005). Carolyn Steel, architect and author of *Hungry City: How Food Shapes our Lives*, explains the significance of the kitchen as:

The subject [the kitchen] goes to the heart of so many twentieth-century preoccupations: questions of identity, family values, feminism. For the past 100 years, domestic kitchens have been political battlegrounds; stages upon which the on-going struggle for social prestige and meaning have been played out. Everything about them has been a matter of debate: their function, their design, their materiality, their image, their visibility. There could be no more eloquent symbol of our conflicted attitudes towards cooking than our lack of consensus about any of these questions. (Steel, 2011, p.182)

The importance of the kitchen in socio-cultural studies can be observed in Dale Southerton’s book, *Consuming Kitchens: Taste, Context and Identity Formation*. He gives his reasons for the choice of the kitchen in his case study. He believes the kitchen is instructive because, first of all, it is not visible unless a guest or an outsider takes it into account. Secondly, he argues the kitchen is an emotional place attached to the family (quoted from Corrigan, 1997) and the last reason, cited by the British anthropologist, Daniel Miller (1988), who believes that although the kitchen is becoming more standardised, there is still room for stylisation and personalisation (Southerton, 2001). The kitchen, accordingly, is one of the best places to study personality, lifestyle, identity and individuality (Mielke, 2004). As such, it perfectly suits the cultural aspects of my research. Moreover, the social aspects of the kitchen can make it a good place to study playful engagements as well. Rita Meilke, in her book, *The Kitchen: History, Culture and Design*, quotes from Otl Aicher, the German graphic designer, who explains, ‘in the kitchen, man is a social being. The kitchen is a function of man’s social nature. Cooking is only a pleasure when others

join in eating. And cooking is even more of a pleasure, if others join in the cooking.’ Afterwards, he presents the therapeutic function of cooking and being in the kitchen. He notes: ‘[Cooking can be] a hobby, and a means of bringing happiness; leisure time for both men and women’ (Aicher, 1982 quoted in Meilke, 2004, pp.9-11). The entertainment aspects of the kitchen have recently been the focus of some research. Shove emphasises that the changes people consider can be in the way they cook or eat but it is also done in order to socialise, play and entertain (Shove, 2007, p.25).

In addition, in the core of any discussion about cooking, eating, and other kitchen practices, there lies the very important issue of wellbeing and health. As the focus of this research is on the role of kitchen practices and appliances in presenting playful engagements, I expect that it is very important to consider play and pleasure, not only for satisfying individuals’ desires but also as an essential and important element in our wellbeing and health.

The cooking culture of today has witnessed controversial phases in terms of wellbeing and health. For many wealthier parts of Western societies, this culture is more commoditised, bursting with innovation and progress, and approached more frivolously than being just practical (Short, 2006), yet for others, the interest in cooking is declining, thanks to a fast-food culture and busier lifestyles. Cooking culture in Britain is defined in relation to two opposites of fresh and real versus artificial and processed, slow versus fast, homemade versus artisanal (Short, 2006). However, statistics illustrate an undesirable situation that makes the authorities worry about the future of cooking culture in Britain. It is true that modern kitchens are surrounded by technological developments and are affected by the diversity and variety of globalisation, but some users view the kitchen as a ‘meal machine’ (Steel, 2011, p.195), with a sink, a fridge and a microwave being the key components.

Whilst shops and supermarkets offer a wealth of different fresh ingredients and foodstuffs, some people tend to use convenience food more and so do not benefit from making healthier choices (Steel, 2011). There is some evidence that for part of society, the kitchen has lost its function and has been reduced to a small corner with a few crucial white goods. The increase of single-person households has affected the

quality of life in parts of society. In Britain, recent statistics show that the proportion of one-person households increased from 27.8% in 1996 to 29.0% in 2012, or by 1.0 million to 7.6 million (Gask, 2012). This increase has had an impact in terms of creating the need to have different policies to support provision for various household types and other services which, in some cases, involves housing with the minimum size of kitchen; in fact, the space standards of British homes 'are some of the smallest in Europe' (Steel, 2011, p.196). Such a lack of space removes any opportunity for the kitchen to be viewed as a social space with associated displays of gender and/or identity.

Simultaneously, there is an increase in the number of cookery classes for school pupils or private courses for interested people. They attract 'ordinary people' (as well as professionals) through advertisements, online or in newspapers, offering a range of prices, for a complete course or even for one lesson. Nevertheless, specialists such as Ali Farrel, a food and technology practitioner from the Food Forum, believe that as long as these courses focus on cooking standard recipes and a range of dishes, the lack of cooking skills among youngsters and students could be an issue. Instead, cooking lessons would be beneficial only if they teach people to understand foods, help them to make choices and gain the skills of problem solving and innovative creation; teaching such courses would be more beneficial if they emphasised 'a healthy diet and value for money' (quoted from Ali Farrel in Short, 2006).

Based on such arguments, one can conclude that in order to gain the best result from any interventions, a better understanding of cooking practices in different cultural and social contexts should be considered. Investment in policies, technology and design should shift individuals towards more personal, innovative and engaging processes of cooking. The reasons for losing cooking skills is not the focus of this research, however, it demonstrates that the activities connected to the kitchen can be crucial to a society and design scholars can have a role in developing and improving individuals' health, wellbeing and happiness.

All in all, the kitchen and the many activities connected to it are important for the benefit of this research as I believe the kitchen plays a significant role in presenting

today's culture, either in its playful form, in which I am interested, or in terms of its other social and cultural aspects. It would be appropriate, in my view, to investigate the first trace of the ludification of societies and when, where and how, in relation to the kitchen.

Playful design, health and wellbeing

Whilst recent studies on play focus on the role of play in education and problem solving, I set out to examine play and playful practices in the context of food preparation and dining in the home. Pre-packaged food and unhealthy eating patterns have become one of the problems of modern societies. Numerous TV series on health and food, master chefs' programmes, and local and international food events and festivals are promoting culinary skills and informing people about the consequences of poor eating habits. Such programmes and events aim to educate people while entertaining them. Nevertheless, despite the increasing variety of socio-cultural practices and economic interests in this issue, government reports on health and wellbeing tend to show unsatisfying results and disappointing figures. Health census results report an increasing number of overweight and obese children and adults Sturgeon, 2010 (Sturgeon and Mccoll, 2010) and a growing number of cases of malnutrition amongst the older generation in the UK (Cabinet Office, 2008). Scientists warn of the social and economic consequences of such malfunctions in Western societies and see this as a threat to family relationships and cultural identities (Fernandez-Armesto, qouted in Short, 2006, p.5).

According to the [Bulletin of the World Health Organization](#), cardiovascular diseases as a result of unhealthy lifestyles, including unhealthy diets, cause 150,000 deaths every year in the UK (O'Flaherty et al., 2012). Scotland particularly has one of the highest rates of obesity among OECD¹ countries. Based on the Scottish Government report in 2010, the rate for adults was over a million and over 150,000 for children. It is predicted this rate will reach 40% by 2030 (Sturgeon and Mccoll, 2010). Based on

¹ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

a survey in 2011, malnutrition affects approximately 1 in 4 adults referred to hospitals (Bapen, 2012) which represents a promising reduction from 1 in 3 adults from 2008 and is the cause of more than 70,000 preventable premature deaths (Cabinet Office, 2008). However, this imposes a £6 billion burden of economic pressure on the government annually (O'Flaherty et al., 2012).

Research such as this on the food choices and eating habits in the UK highlights a lack of interest in healthy cooking in society as one contributing factor to the problem and suggests behavioural changes in lifestyle and patterns of cooking and eating in order to encourage people to care more about their food consumption. Steel clarifies how the active process of cooking at home from raw ingredients has been replaced by the passive acquisition of food through ready-meal or convenience food in recent years. She evaluates cooking at home as an active practice that extends beyond the kitchen and involves many social, cultural and educational interactions. She points out:

People who don't cook don't use local food shops, invite their friends around for dinner, know where food comes from, realise what they're putting into their bodies, understand the impact of their diet in the planet- or educate their children in any of the above. (Steel, 2011)

Explaining all of these disadvantages, she notes that, in Britain, there is a clear lack of connection with the food that is eaten, and she criticises the British population for their extreme fondness for ready meals and the consumption of industrialised food production more than any other European nation (Steel, 2011, p.163).

A 2002 Mintel survey on *Eating Habits* revealed that seven out of ten women 'love to cook' in Germany and the same was true for Spanish and Italian women. In France, 41 per cent of adults enjoy cooking in a traditional way. Whereas in a 2007 survey conducted in Britain, *Eating Habits* reported that fifty per cent of those under 24 admitted that they have 'no skills' in the kitchen (Steel, 2011, p.195; Wrap, 2007). Statistics, after five years, in 2012, present some improvement in the rate of British adults who cook from scratch, and its potential positive impact on British health and wellbeing, neglecting the fact that the main cause is believed to be austerity (Mitskavets, 2012). 'However, the continually rising rate of adult and children's

obesity in the UK is a cause for concern, with recent Europe-wide reports putting Britain near the top of the most obese nations in Europe' (Mitskavets, 2012).

Reports from scholars such as Steel point to a further loss of gastronomic skills and cooking culture among the future generations in Britain. This is a warning also issued by researchers at the Centre for Food Policy at City University London. In January 2012, they demanded more government support in this area to improve cooking skills across the UK, following their recent study in Liverpool which 'demonstrated the powerful impact which cooking skills can have on promoting healthy eating and lifestyles' (Jenkins, 2012). 'Can Cook' is one of their enhancing programmes which includes different activities such as school competitions and cooking classes for both adults and school pupils (Jenkins, 2012). Similarly, in Scotland, a number of projects have attempted to encourage people, children and adults in different communities to cook and learn more about healthy food, such as Blasda: Scotland's Local Food Feast (since 2012), and school programmes developed by the Scottish Food and Drink Federation (since 1999).

On a celebrity level, the influential English cook, Jamie Oliver, has, through the establishment of the Jamie Oliver Foundation, suggested that the ideal situation is one in which everyone, amateur or experienced, can have the opportunity to cook a variety of tasty and healthy foods from scratch. The Foundation believes that this skill has a close connection to making healthier and happier individuals in the society. Oliver promotes this slogan in his virtual site, Ministry of Food: 'Keep cooking skill alive' (*Jamie's Ministry of Food*, 2012). He established and campaigned for the international Food Revolution Day on May 19th 2012, May 17th 2013 and May 16th 2014 'to inspire change in people's food habits and to promote the mission for better food and education for everyone' all over the world (Jamie's Ministry of Food, 2014).

I would add to this debate by arguing that designers could also endeavour to play a role in this mission to engender a greater appreciation for one's own health and wellbeing. I consider my research of playful approaches as an appropriate agent for problem solving and dealing with such key socio-cultural dilemmas and

controversies of today. Examples of playful design intervention to promote healthy lifestyles are not new, but are few in number. Choosing to focus on healthy activity rather than healthy food to promote wellbeing, the interactive *Piano Stairs* at Odenplan subway station in Stockholm, Sweden, promoted by The Fun Theory website, has been a successful project which enticed 66% of passers-by to use the stairs rather than a nearby escalator. The stairs were equipped with musical sensors so that each stair was transformed into a piano key, which played to the steps of the pedestrians as they climbed or descended the stairs (*Piano Staircase*, 2009). Another example, in terms of design being at the heart of improving wellbeing and adjusting bad habits, is the *Piss Screen* (Figure 1-8). This was introduced in Frankfurt to attempt to solve the socio-cultural problem of drunk driving (Designboom, 2007a). Basically, the Piss-Screen is a video game that is installed above the urinals in bars and cafés. Reacting to the pressure of urine, the car in the video game races along a track, however, if the pressure is uneven or unbalanced the car will crash. A fairly intoxicated man would have a difficult time controlling the car within the game and hopefully, would perceive this as a warning to prevent him from driving home from the bar or café at that stage.



Figure 1-8: The Piss Screen

However, there are very few examples of this interactive approach in the design of cooking, eating and food preparation appliances. The *Eat Fit Dumb Bell* cutlery set

(Figure 1-9), promoted by the shopping websites for quirky and ‘cool’ products, www.thecheeky.com and www.firebox.com, playfully combines the normal function of forks, knives and spoons with fitness equipment - an ironic composition of gaining and burning calories at the same time. However, the interaction is minimal and the impact of the joke is short-lived and superficial. This research advocates that the importance of playful design lies more in the active intervention on the part of the user, whilst incorporating an element of playful interaction.



Figure 1-9: The Eat Fit Dumb Bell Cutlery Set

2 Literature review: contextualising play

In recent years, a large and growing body of literature has investigated play, primarily in the fields of psychology (Else, 2009; Sutton-Smith, 2005; Sutton-Smith, 1997) and philosophy (De Lange, 2010; De Mul, 2005) and more recently, in digital game studies (Kücklich, 2003; Salen and Zimmerman, 2003; Salen and Zimmerman, 2006). In addition, play, metaphorically, has been used in the description of ‘postmodern conditions’ (De Lange, 2010) in cultural studies, art, business and management (Pink, 2005). Play has permeated product design, (along with other design disciplines) and been used in a range of domains, from design methodology to design critics, from playful experiments to actually playful artefacts. However, the literature to be found in this area is diverse, lacks cohesion and is frequently peripheral to the subject.

In this chapter, I explore some of the key territories of play, particularly focusing on how play theorists define play and argue for its importance in everyday life, in order to help build a conceptual framework to define playful products. In addition, I review and evaluate the notion of play in product design as addressed by design researchers and critics, and in the work of designers. AoI, as a leading holistic approach that claims to define different levels of engagement in products, is reviewed and its potential in relation to exploring playful interactions is examined. Finally, for the purpose of this research, after articulating play, its relation to the players and design, a taxonomy of playful artefacts is introduced.

Playful behaviour is a prevalent trend in the 21st century which is influencing the culture of design and encouraging playful interactions which engage us throughout our daily lives, from video games to mobile phones and virtual networking. Game and play cultures, through mainly new media applications, have spread to many territories. In advertisements, for example, the SIM card provider O2 promotes its services by offering playful activities exclusively for its online members (O2, 2009).

Further evidence of this approach is supported by numerous images accompanying playful, ironic and surprising designed ideas that reach people’s email boxes and

Facebook accounts (Figure 2-1) on a daily basis. In fashion, the designer, [Hussein Chalayan](#) (1970-) playfully combines technology with his catwalk presentations (Figure 2-2), and the self-taught English chef, [Heston Blumenthal](#) (1966-), has brought play to the food industry with his innovative and sensory food projects such as ‘French toast with bacon ice-cream’ (Figure 2-3). Clearly, play penetrates many aspects of domestic and professional life with all these examples demonstrating the truth of Huizinga’s claim that we are, genuinely, *homo ludens* – perhaps more than ever before.

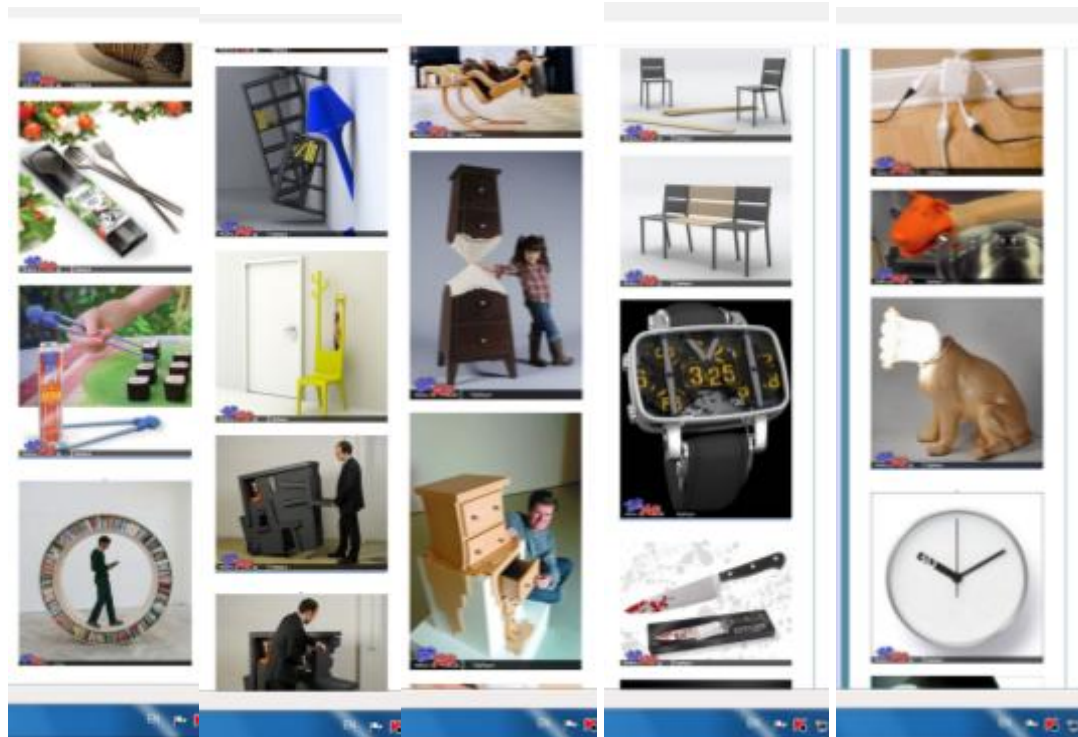


Figure 2-1: Posted emails about new playful inventions in design



Figure 2-2: Chalayan's autumn/winter collection 2000-2001



Figure 2-3: French toast with bacon ice-cream

2.1 What is play?

The term, play, has broad usage and many applications in English, from scientific to symbolic. As it is shown by an online visual thesaurus, play (Diagram 2-1) has more than 40 different connotations which show the complexity of the word in everyday usage.

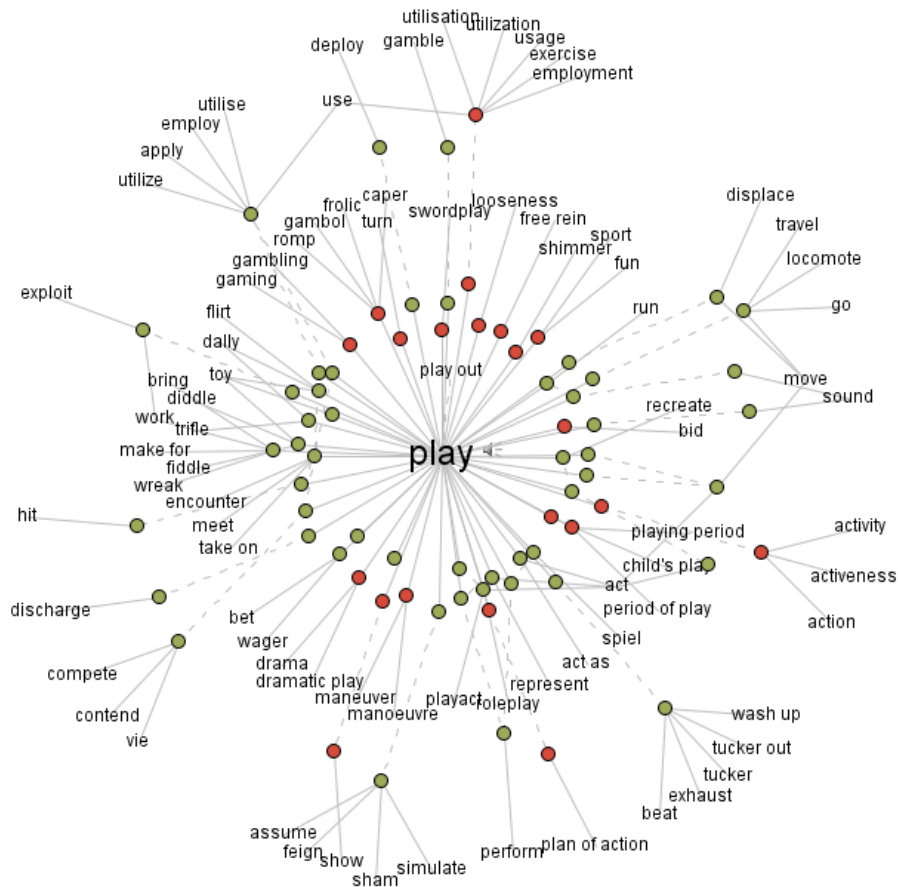


Diagram 2-1: Suggested connotations of play by Think Map Visual Thesaurus

The *Cambridge online dictionary* gives one of the meanings for play as a noun as: an ‘activity that is not serious but done for enjoyment, especially when children enjoy themselves with toys and games’ and as a verb, it provides further clarification such that ‘when you play, especially as a child, you spend time doing an enjoyable and/or entertaining activity’ (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, 2009). In psychology, play is an instinct that nature has given children, like some other animals, and is believed to be crucial for human survival (Sutton-Smith, 2005; Else, 2009, p.11).

In contrast to these definitions focused on children as the main characters of play, play has also been considered by some academics as equally apt in adulthood. More scholarly definitions of play explain that play is deliberate, pleasurable, and is for fun (Cohen, 1987, p.1). Humans play for relaxation, it gives them the opportunity to

escape from reality, and in order to satisfy some of the 'imitative instinct' (Sutton-Smith, 1997, p.11) and to discharge superabundant vital energy (Huizinga, 1949, p.2). However, for all such researchers, 'play is not trivial; it is a basic biological drive as critical to our health as sleep or food' (Brown and Vaughan, 2009). Sutton-Smith points out, 'the opposite of play is not work, it is depression.' (Sutton-Smith quoted in Pink, 2005)

However, in this research, by reviewing different definitions of play, I focus on the definitions of play in regard to creativeness, consciousness and the construction of self. I believe these territories of play lead us to a better understanding of playful product design. A most apt definition of play in favour of playful design was revealed by the computer game theorists, Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, in *Rules of Play* in 2004. They define 'play as a free movement within a more rigid structure' (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004, p.304).

Play emerges from the relationships guiding the functioning of the system, occurring in the interstitial spaces between and among its components. Play is an expression of the system, one that takes advantage of the space of possibility created from the system's structure.

In other words, any ruled system can afford some degree of play and on this subject, Salen and Zimmerman are in line with Sutton-Smith, who said: 'Almost anything can allow play to occur within its boundaries' (Sutton-Smith, 1997, p.3). It is the creative mind that can take advantage of these possibilities. However, the definition of play in regard to the emotions it elicits as the media researcher, [Aphra Kerr](#) explains, will be 'a pleasure when control, immersion and performance are combined' (Kerr et al., 2006; De Lange, 2010).

In the introduction, the importance of the topic of play in contemporary culture was briefly mentioned. In the following paragraphs, in addition to those primary arguments, the essentiality of play in everyday life is discussed further. The aim in this section is to consider the role of play in everyday products and the benefit that playful artefacts can deliver to individuals.

The National Institute for Play (NIP) has provided a useful directory which encompasses the many aspects that have been studied. Play, according to the NIP, has educational and health benefits, creative aspects, and social values which are essential with regard to the quality of human life. Play, like laughter, has been proven to be beneficial to the human brain. The fun and pleasure one receives has a physical and emotional impact on the brain. It has also been demonstrated that physical play for older people can postpone mental decline (Brown and Vaughan, 2009).

Learning processes are accelerated through play and ‘sometimes the best way to teach a complicated subject is to play with it’ (Shute, 2009). As a result, children do better academically when they have time to play or play while learning. Even ‘animals remember things better and longer when those things are learned through play, perhaps because of the total involvement and focus that play requires.’ (Shute, 2009)

As early as 1938, Huizinga was criticising scientific definitions for neglecting the aesthetic aspects of play. He argued that, ‘although the attribute of beauty does not attach to play as such, play nevertheless tends to assume marked elements of beauty.’ (Huizinga, 1949) For him, the beauty of play relied on the harmony and rhythm one experiences in the climax of play. More recently, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the positivist psychologist who holds the professorship at Claremont Graduate University, describes it as the moment of ‘*flow*’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Following that, De Lange discusses ‘the enjoyment of a play aesthetic of new media’ (De Lange, 2010, p. 63) whilst he does not give many details. Instead, he explains some crucial aspects of play in the work of other researchers such as the media scholars Kerr, Julian Kücklich and Pat Brereton and with regard to ‘the creative pleasure people experience in productive consumption’ (De Lange, 2010), including mobile phones.

Territory of play

In philosophy, Plato, Aristotle, Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), and John Dewey (1859-1952), among others, tried to define the essence of play but besides the philosophical debates associated with it, the concept of play

has tended to be explored by psychologists. The psychology of child development has given the most weight to defining play. In psychology, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Carl Jung (1875-1961), Jean Piaget (1896-1980), Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), Winnicott and Sutton-Smith have been among the influential scholars who have drawn attention to the value of play and its function (Else, 2009, pp. 140-148).

In addition, there are other scholars in anthropology and the history of culture who see play as having a broader scope, such as the French sociologist Roger Caillois (1913-1978), the English anthropologist Victor Turner (1920-1983) and Huizinga. Huizinga presented 'play theory' in, *Homo ludens*, which shed light on the untold aspects of play; from art and culture to politics ((Anchor, 1978; Salen and Zimmerman, 2003; Dovey and Kennedy, 2006; De Lange, 2010). He described play as 'a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it is "different" from "ordinary life"' (Huizinga, 1949, p.28). Six elements of 1) voluntary status, 2) time, 3) place, 4) rule, 5) aim, and finally 6) state of feeling are very important in this definition.

However, not all the definition is structured as such. Play is also defined as abstract and ambiguous (Sutton-Smith, 1997). When a pattern is ambiguous, it allows for more than one interpretation (Hekkert, 2006). Turner talks about the 'liminal' and 'liminoid' quality of play (Turner, 1974). Something that stands at the threshold between reality and unreality (Sutton-Smith, 1997, p.1), real life and fantasy, a situation that sometimes posits against serious matters or 'seriousness' (Turner, 1982) but of itself it can be very serious. This is the paradoxical quality of play mentioned by the biologist Geoffrey Bateson (1955-); the most debatable and striking thing about play is to assume it is something different from ordinary life.

Salen and Zimmerman by introducing a frame named a 'magic circle' (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004, p.94; De Lange, 2010) reinforce this separation of play and reality, although they confess the boundaries of this circle, in the case of play and ludic activities, are much more blurred and unknown than in the case of games

(Salen and Zimmerman, 2004). According to them, slipping into and out of play, in contrast to participating in a game, is easier. One never knows when exactly play starts or finishes and the outside or real world carries on. They give the example of how eating peanuts, by tossing one up and catching it in the mouth, can be playful and it takes you to the magic circle, while for players of a game, rules and preparation are essential. The contradictory nature of play and serious matters is raised here. It is generally believed that the start of one is the end of the other, and vice versa. In following this line of thought, expecting to experience them at the same time is impossible. However, Jacques Ehrmann, the French literary theorist, and Kane are among those who challenge this oppositional definition of play against real or ordinary life. Ehrmann notes:

... play cannot be defined as a luxury. [P]lay cannot be defined by isolating it on the basis of its relationship to an *a priori* reality and culture. To define play is *at the same time* and *in the same movement* to define reality and to define culture. As each term is a way to apprehend the two others, they are each elaborated, constructed through and on the basis of the two others. (De Lange, 2010)

Kane, with a more contemporary approach, criticises the separation of play from serious work, and expresses that only, and just only with a playful attitude, we can ‘maintain our adaptability, vigour and optimism in the face of an uncertain, risky demanding world’ (Kane, 2004, p.63; Else, 2009, p.152).

From the product design point of view, I believe design needs to integrate these oppositional ideas and approaches with the ideas of scholars such as Kane and Ehrmann. To implement this idea into product design, one challenge will be defining functionality with regard to playability. Playability was borrowed from Kücklich and game studies. In 2003, in his article, *Play and Playability as Key Concepts in New Media Studies*, a report on research undertaken with Marie Curie sponsorship, Kücklich described some aspects of new media and computer games. He explained:

[t]he term playability is used in popular games criticism to indicate the extent to which a certain game has the capability to provide enjoyment for a player over an extended period of time. Therefore playability is closely related to re-

playability, i.e. a game's power to challenge the player to another go at the game after it has been solved (Kücklich, 2003).

Then, Kücklich concluded that 'play is not just a mode of interaction the user is subjected to, but also an attitude that she brings to the medium in the form of notions and expectations about the technology or text'. As such, playability is defined in relation to the player's attitudes, skills and expectations. Kücklich added to this the confrontation of 'usability' and 'playability'. For him, usability means 'making [...] functionality as accessible as possible to the user' whilst playability 'often depends on withholding certain options from the player' involved (Kücklich, 2003). It is very important in designing games that 'the player does not have access to the full range of options the game offers initially, but only after she has invested some time into the game' (Kücklich, 2003). Playability, as a result, is a deferral strategy to keep the player motivated and challenge him/her to spend more time in playing the game but obviously, not too hard such that he/she will lose their motivation (Kücklich, 2003).

De Lange also acknowledges this issue of division and shows how new media devices such as mobile phones break down this boundary of playfulness and 'seriousness' (Turner, 1982; De Lange, 2010). In four different 'play levels', he proposes playful interactions with mobile phones or, as he prefers to call them, 'mobile media'¹, from the most figurative to abstract. These four levels are as follows: play on the mobile, play with the mobile, play by the mobile, play through the mobile.

According to his fourfold view, mobile media are considered as gaming devices and interfaces to engage in play, such as actual game applications on mobile phones. Secondly, 'play with the mobile, takes mobile media as 'playable' material artefacts that elicit play practices and playful orientations in our relations to the devices. As material artefacts, mobile media mediate our interactions with the physical

¹Following the approach of other scholars such as Gerard Goggin (2006), De Lange prefers to use the term 'mobile media' as a broader and more flexible term than 'mobile phone' (De Lange, 2010, p.27). Mobile phones today are sharing many functions with other media technologies.

environment, with other people physically present, and ourselves'(De Lange, 2010). This quality shows the mobile phone as an active device which, with the aid of some creative thought, can be used playfully. Play through the mobile, thirdly, takes mobile media as a communication medium that socially connects people through the exchange of messages, photos, jokes, and so on. Each of these actions can signify a ritual, symbolic or unsaid meaning. Finally, in play by the mobile, he considers mobile media as an active 'other party' of engagement that gives us the feeling of 'being played', something as the consequence of 'media culture' and its power that cannot be avoided most of the time (De Lange, 2010).

This wide range of playful activities introduced by De Lange can be also explained by Salen and Zimmerman's categorisation (2003), Diagram 2-2. According to them, play encompasses different categories of activities from rule demand structures like games to a very subjective experience, such as creating nicknames for friends. Their categories are game plays, ludic activities and being playful.

- Game play is a structured form of play which its boundary defined by rules of play. Games and sports are in this category.
- Ludic activities are about testing the boundaries and limits of all the structures we normally encounter. As Salen and Zimmerman exemplify, it is about how a round object such as a ball can be playful in relation to the structure of a wall, ground, gravity and the skills of the player. It is less structured than game play but it has the essence of playfulness.
- Being playful, as an umbrella term for all different sorts of playfulness, includes typical play activities to being in a playful state of mind, 'where a spirit of play is injected into some other action'. It is more culturally contextualised and less structured. For instance, 'we are being playful with words when we create nicknames for friends or invent rhymes to tease them', walking playfully in the street or decorate our furniture and food in a playful way. When we dress in a playful way we play with the fixed cultural codes which allow us to show some playfulness. 'In each case, the spirit of play infuses otherwise ordinary actions.' (Salen, Zimmerman, 2003, p.303)

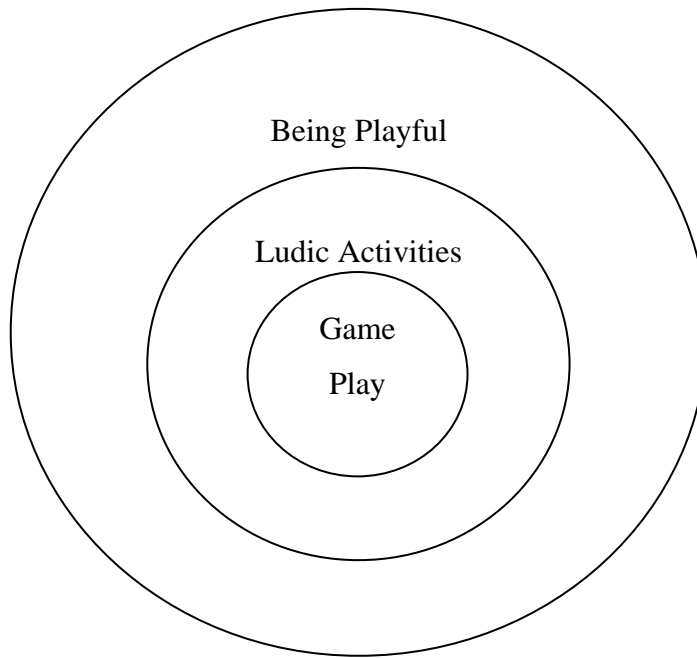


Diagram 2-2: The relationship between being playful, ludic activities and game play

Caillois developed his ideas to create a typology of play. According to this typology, play consists of four types (Salen and Zimmerman, 2006; De Lange, 2010):

- *Agôn*: Competitive play and mastery, as in chess, sports, and other contests
- *Alea*: Chance-based play, based on games of probability
- *Mimicry*: Role-playing, pretence and make-believe play, including theatre and other exercises of the imagination
- *Ilinx*: Playing with the physical sensation of vertigo and sensory delusion, as when a child spins and spins until he falls down

The importance of this categorisation is in defining a polar characteristic for each type of play as shown in Table 2-1. As a result, in defining play, the degree of freedom in creativity, detachment from reality and following the rules of play is significant. Play is not this or that, but it is defined, relatively, in relation to some parameters.

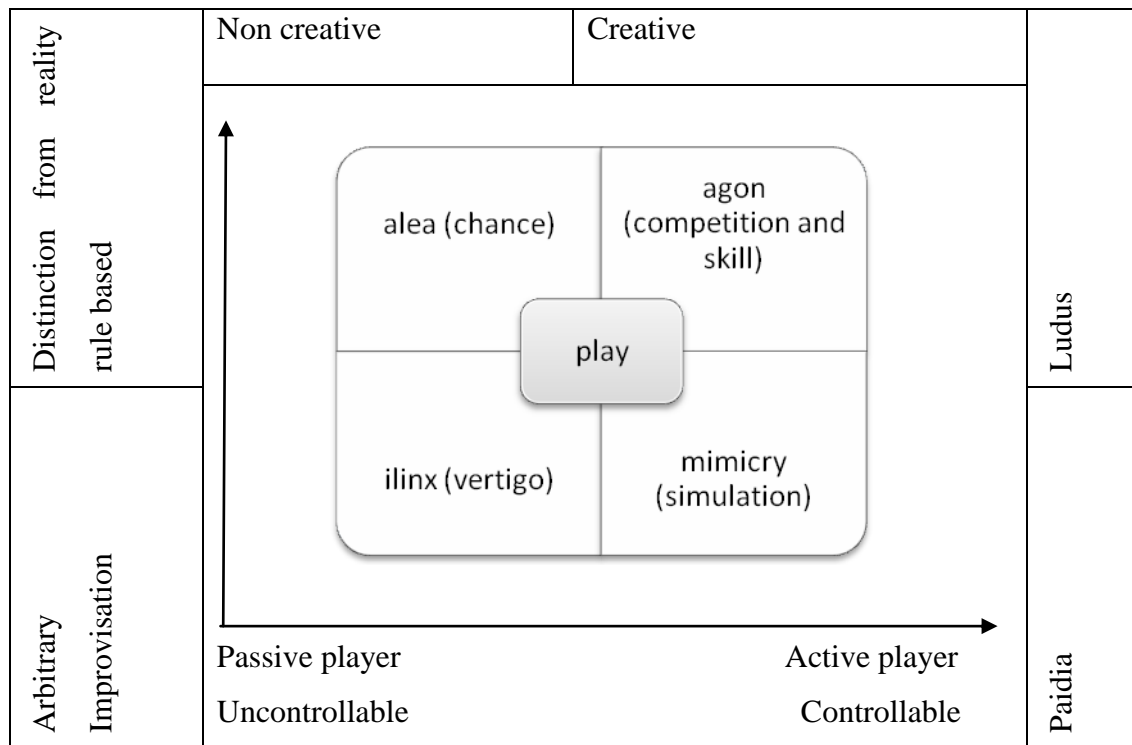


Table 2-1: Caillois' typology of play

Another classification of Caillois posits that each of these types relates to the two poles of *paidia* and *ludus*. '*Paidia* refers to diversion, turbulence, free improvisation, carefree gaiety and laughter, spontaneous, impulsive, joyous, uncontrolled fantasy' (De Lange, 2010, p. 50). *Ludus*, on the other hand, disciplines and gives structure to *paidia*, as 'it is absorbing, rule-governed, [...] and involves skill and mastery', (Caillois, 2001, pp. 13, 27-35 quoted in De Lange, 2010, p. 50). As Table 2-1 shows, *agon* and *alea* are considered as *ludus* while *ilinx* and *mimicry* lean towards *paidia*. Whilst, *ilinx* and *mimicry* can be spontaneous, and based on improvisation, *alea* and *agon* are more rule-based, distinctive, conventional, game formatted and detached from reality. They can provide an equal ground for players, a quality which cannot be found in the real world. Whilst both *alea* and *ilinx* are yielded to and restricted by the outside world of play, and they are passive and uncontrollable from the player's side, *mimicry* and *agon* can be active and under the control of the players. As a result, the creative nature of players can affect the result and the joy involved. As

much as *alea* and *agon* can be associated with games, *ilinx* and *mimicry* are more being playful in nature (De Lange, 2010).

Play and the player

As has been discussed, most of the scholarly definitions of play agree on its deliberate, pleasurable, and fun (Sutton-Smith, 1997; Cohen, 1986, p.1) quality, either in the shape of game or play. Sutton-Smith, quoting from Michael Lewis (1937-), Professor of Paediatrics and Psychiatry, Rutgers University, New Jersey, notes that ‘the importance and meaning of play, at least for humans, would appear to be in its affective function; ... a combination of fun and whimsy, which distinguishes this activity from all other positive experiences, such as eating or sexual behaviour’ (Sutton-Smith, 1997, p.32). In fact, no matter which of the mentioned categorisations we follow, play gives the player a feeling of enjoyment and pleasure not comparable with other activities.

But the question here is how these emotions draw from play. What applications do we need to follow to boost these positive emotions? In Caillios’ typology of play, in addition to its holistic approach towards play, he implicitly highlights the parameter of skill in eliciting fun and joy in play activities. It seems that the navigation between these features of play, from active to passive, controlled to uncontrolled by outside influences and from rule governed to improvised, is connected to players’ skill and their awareness of the rules, as well as the limitation or unlimited condition of the play in which they are involved. These levels of awareness and skill will affect the joy they ultimately gain from the experience. This raises the role of the player in the play. According to Csikszentmihalyi, in order to pursue happiness, we need to reach a state of psychic activity or ‘*flow*’ (Diagram 2-2). *Flow* is a condition in which one immerses oneself with positive emotions of joy and happiness in doing something or engaging with physical or mental challenges. The highly skilled performer in a very challenging activity will create *flow*, similar to what happens to many professional game players and champions (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

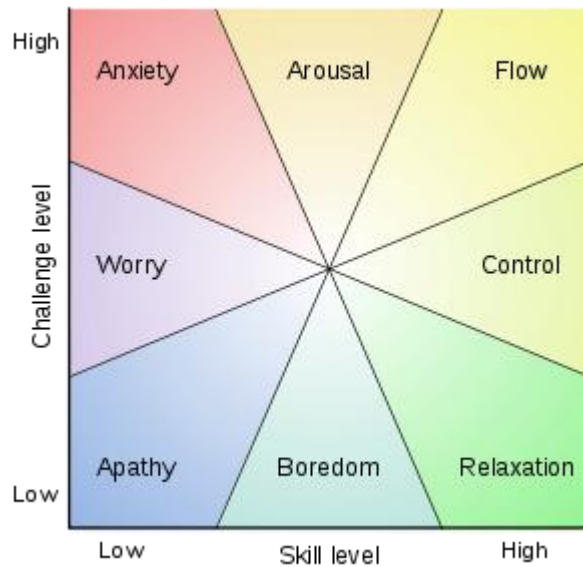


Diagram 2-2: Csikszentmihalyi's illustration of flow

I would argue that what Csikszentmihalyi describes as *flow* is relevant to the aforementioned play and playability. Play is also dealing with positive emotions such as pleasure and enjoyment. Basically, *flow* is the ultimate state for any sort of play. As a result, play and its challenges should be compatible with the skills of the players (a rule in playability), otherwise they will end up experiencing apathy, boredom and anxiety (Diagram 2-2).

This argument is frequently followed by game designers in relation to the compatibility of games with users' skills, and it is also discussed in the work of Salen and Zimmerman with regard to computer game designing (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004). Moreover, Csikszentmihalyi argues, everyday activities such as 'mowing the lawn or waiting in a dentist's office can become enjoyable provided one restructures the activity by providing goals, rules, and the other elements of enjoyment' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The pleasure to be gained from the most mundane activities, and that provide more engaging interactions, has been pursued in human-computer interaction and education recently, under the headings of funology, ludic design, playful interaction, serious games, game-based learning and gamification.

During the last three decades, the use of computer and video games has become widespread and their users are not limited to groups of youngsters, nor are they purely for entertainment purposes. Hence, the study of digital games, its capacity and effect have drawn the attention of service providers and researchers in the areas of education, marketing and information studies. Among the emergent concepts in this area of study, ‘gamification’ is a term that explains ‘the use of game design elements in non-game contexts’ (Deterding, 2012) and has found its way into human computer interactions and design. Those who develop ‘gameful’ services and products advocate an effective result when typical elements of game playing are integrated into serious subjects such as education and healthcare. Rules and competition are the best known characteristics of games that lead a player/gamer towards a specified and discrete outcome. Whilst it is entertaining, it can be useful and have a function beyond entertainment. Among other things, for example, a recent study revealed that a game-based intervention influenced, positively, the level of fruit and vegetable consumption in primary schools (Brooke et al., 2014).

Although game designers and media researchers such as Sebastian Deterding emphasise that this quality is different from playful interaction, I believe that despite the different terminology, they all share the one distinct characteristic, namely, to improve users’ experience and achieve better engagement with products and services. In ‘Gamification: toward a definition’, Deterding illustrates gamification in regard to playful interaction (Diagram 2-3) and explains that gamification is different from playful interactions, playful design, or design for playfulness although ‘in practice [...] the design of gamified applications will often give rise to playful behaviours and mindsets’ (Deterding et al., 2011). Playful interaction as a broader concept is shifting towards more non-ruled, improvised and arbitrary practices of play. While gamification is the application of play and game elements to real life goals and tasks, ludification can be defined with regard to the playful elements in our lives and culture.

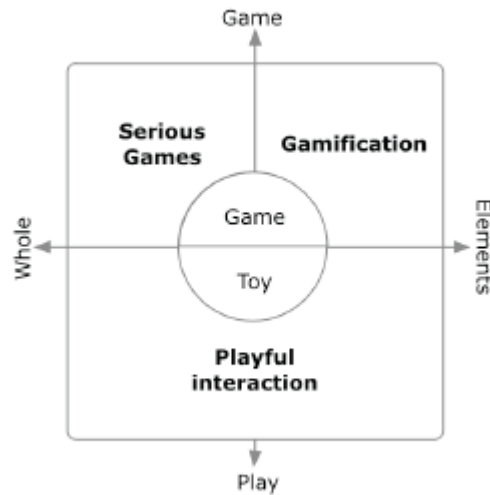


Diagram 2-3: Gamification posited in regard to playful interactions

Play and consciousness

Consciousness in play is important as it defines how play of any sort engages us and on what level. Basically, we chose play for relaxation and as an opportunity to escape from reality, as is believed by play theorists such as Sutton-Smith. Play is a deliberate decision. Thus, it needs some degree of awareness, consciousness and creativity from the player. Caillios's typology also highlights the role of creativity in play.

Play always has some element of creativity, it teaches one to use imagination. It is now on the agenda for many creative and innovative professions and programmes, including design (Brown, 2008). It might sound like an overstatement but the National Institute for Play believes 'a little play can help solve big problems' (Shute, 2009)!

As illustrated in Table 2-1, some types of play need more creativity than others. Jung was the first to identify the role of play in regard to creativity. He believed play and creativity are not completely conscious processes but rather that the unconscious influences creativity and playfulness. 'The creative mind plays with the object it loves' (Jung, 1981 quoted in Else, 2009, p. 143). Similarly, Sutton-Smith acknowledges this as being connected to the emergence of art and literature (Sutton-Smith, 1997) whereas Csikzentmihalyi, in *Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness*, explains consciousness and its association with

flow and the example of a sportsman playing a game. He notes the ‘optimal experience or *flow* [...] obtains when all the contents of consciousness are in harmony with each other, and with the goals that define the person’s self. These are the subjective conditions we call pleasure, happiness, satisfaction and enjoyment.’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p.24) He considers three elements are necessary for consciousness: attention, memory and awareness. For him, *flow* is the genuine outcome of consciousness.

If this is so then what makes play different? If we accept play as a feature that is common to humans and other animals, and see the instinctive need for it, as many scholars such as Huizinga and Sutton-Smith believe, then it would be appropriate to consider play as a broader territory for pleasure and enjoyment which encompasses both consciousness and sub-consciousness; it depends on which level of play one has been engaged in that the different level of consciousness becomes involved.

Play and identity

Play has a constructive role in shaping our identity. New approaches to play emphasise this role based on the belief that play involves layers of identity construction. Play, as ritual, reinforces our cultural identities (Sutton-Smith, 1997; Else, 2009, p.100) and playful practices in life experiences construct fluid and flexible identities in people (De Mul, 2005). Kane states that ‘play is fundamental to both society and to the individual, and that the work ethic that has been prominent in the West for the past 300 years is increasingly irrelevant in the twenty-first century.’ It is the time to equip ourselves with play to overcome the life challenges. He notes, ‘we need to be energetic, imaginative and confident in the face of an unpredictable, contestive, emergent world’ (Else, 2009, p.152).

As a result, it is not just gender, ethnicity, nationality, age, language, occupation, location, brands - either services or products, and beliefs which influence the issue of distinction and construction of identity, even play could provide a ground for making identities; play, by its nature, brings identity to the players (Sutton-Smith, 1997). The social aspect of play is undeniable. Any play group tends to forge friendship bonds. Play creates, temporarily, bonds among different players, and confronts others, us

against them, me and others; the basics in construction of identity (Sutton-Smith, 1997). The identity shaped as a result of play, according to Huizinga, can last even after play finishes. He noted ‘a play-community generally tends to become permanent even after the game is over. [...] This is for us, not for the ‘others’. What the ‘others’ do ‘outside’ is no concern of ours at the moment [inside]’ (Huizinga, 1954, p.12).

Identity is a pertinent issue for many disciplines: the social sciences, cultural studies, psychology, politics or in art and design. According to the British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1938-), identity is ‘the ongoing sense the self has of who it is, as conditioned through its ongoing interactions with others. Identity is how the self conceives of itself, and labels itself’ (Mathews, 2000). However, the things, belongings and services we have received also have significant roles in reflecting who we are. Cultural researchers, such as Hall, were amongst the first to mention the role of everyday commodities and products in representing social status and class as well as gender, age, and ethnicity (Hall and Du Gay, 1996). In cultural studies, ‘commodities play a crucial part in the formation of individual identities, whether it is the clothes one wears, the music one listens to, the book one reads or the car one owns, for example’ (Rampley, 2005, p.147).

Words such as personal identity, national identity, global identity, product identity, brand or corporate identity and cyber identity have come into existence to challenge, explain and evaluate the socio-cultural phenomena that surround us. In 2005, a team of scholars, under the leadership of Professor Jos De Mul, at the Faculty of Philosophy, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, developed the idea of ‘playful identity’, inspired by Paul Ricoeur’s (1913- 2005) idea of ‘narrative identity’. De Mul and his team question narrative identity with its roots in oral and written culture, and ask if it can be an adequate medium to understand contemporary mediated culture. De Lange, as a member of the team, notes the rise of new media technology and the hypertext quality of it has challenged the linear logic of narrative and shifted it towards more ‘unstable’ (Ryan, 2001) qualities in identities (De Lange, 2010).

As a result, following Ricoeur's triple definition of mimesis¹; prefiguration, configuration and refiguration of narrative identity (Ricoeur, 1991), the three postulated levels of playful identity he has developed which account for the more interactive and reflexive quality of identity with a significant role for play. These three levels of playful identity are as follows:

- Play as a pre-figuration of our daily life
- Play as a free act in a designated time and place with specified rules
- Play as the construction of ludic identity, and a reflexive quality of construction of self (De Mul, 2005)

On the first level, the pre-figuration of our daily life, more than being narrative is becoming playful. The mobile and dynamic qualities of societies can take more account of playful individuals' life stories. That is to say, the element of play penetrates everyday activities, such as using a website to check news or sharing a photo via mobile phone applications. In explaining such a phenomenon, De Lange adds:

When reading cultural symbols it no longer comes 'naturally', we either engage in a playful deciphering puzzle or 'close the circle' by shutting ourselves off. (In go the earbuds, up goes the volume.) Furthermore, people in public situations use their mobile phones in performative 'stage-phonings'. Actions are not just read but also enacted. As argued, the public domain becomes a play arena for agonistic struggles over meaning and ownership. In all cases actions become interactions. Symbolic interactions then are preunderstood as tactical interactive games rather than symbolic narrative reading.

¹ 'Narrative identity' developed by the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur DE MUL, J. 2005. Playful Identities. From narrative to Ludic Self-construction. In: RAESSENS, F. & GOLDSTEIN, F. (eds.) *Hand Book of Computer Game Studies*. Cambridge, Massachusettes, London, England: The MIT Press. in *Time and Narrative* is based on three levels of mimesis: 'Narrative mediation has three moments. People implicitly pre-understand their lives as being composed of narrative elements (*mimesis1*); they actively construct stories about their lives and those of others (*mimesis2*); and they reflexively understand and shape their lives as narratives (*mimesis3*)' (Ricoeur, 1984: ch.3 quoted in De Lange, 2010).

On the second level, the concept of time, place and rule in live stories, under the umbrella of 'plot', has been a focus. Many of the interactions today would be difficult to explain in a linear narrative form. For example, if you receive a home or mobile phone call, an online or off line chat, an email or a text on your mobile with the same content from a friend, it would not have the same meaning in each of those communications. Even your initial reaction after hearing the rings or the alert tunes would not be the same. Each of them conveys a different concept of time, place, and obeys different rules in our communication. One can say, as De Mul and his team believe, there is a playful essence expanded in the socio-cultural concepts of time, place and rules of communication and interactions.

On the third level, as narratives are believed to shape our understanding of ourselves and our communities, play has a reflexive quality which:

By overly acting out people play with the paradoxes between sameness and selfhood by using identity as a means, between individual differences and similarity as members of a group, and between freedom in self-descriptions and force in stereotypical other-ascriptions. A performance aims to create an effect. For that it needs to be acceptable to others. ... In mediated communicative exchanges, and complex societies, identities are not naturally given anymore but negotiated. (De Lange, 2010, pp.241-2)

It is not the first time that play has been found to have links to the issue of identity. Defining play by terms such as fun, enjoyment and pleasure obliged us to consider a greater role for identity. Csikszentmihalyi tries to clarify the difference between the concept of pleasure and enjoyment. According to him, 'pleasure is a feeling of contentment that one achieves whenever information in consciousness says that expectations set by biological programme or by social conditioning have been met. ... [whilst enjoyment] is characterized by a sense of accomplishment ... and novelty' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p.44). In this way, the experiment of enjoyment goes beyond just satisfaction. He further believes that the experience of pleasure does not need any effort from the person and can appear as a result of chemical simulation or the electrical manipulation of the brain, while enjoyment needs some 'investment of psychic energy' and 'attention' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In other words, enjoyment

is a more deliberate activity than pleasure and as a result, 'enjoyment leads to developing of self' and 'complexity' because you are aware of a new experience and something has been changed in you. According to this definition, what we get from activities such as a cooking, eating or a phone conversation would give pleasure and not enjoyment unless you pay considerable attention whilst doing them (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It can be concluded that enjoyment has some degree of consciousness in it which pleasure does not and this consciousness is the self-constructive quality of enjoyment. Thus, play and other enjoyable activities have a transcendent quality which can affect the construction of identity.

Characteristics of play

As can be seen from this review, the literature on the topic demonstrates that play has many dimensions or characteristics. The following list addresses the key constituents of play:

- Play gives pleasure and enjoyment. It is not emotion, but it elicits pleasure and joy which are dimensions of emotion.
- Play is fun and joy.
- Play brings happiness.
- Play is abstract and ambiguous.
- Play is active and dynamic.
- Play is open to outside play, its boundary is blurred.
- Play stands at the threshold between reality and unreality (luminal and liminoid)
- Play brings surprise.
- Play is voluntary and deliberate.
- Play immerses you, bodily and sensually.
- Play is creative, innovative and imaginative.
- Play is mobile and free.
- Play is opportunistic; it takes advantage of structures.
- Play frees us from the power of everyday structures.
- Play is a combination of control, immersion and performance.
- Play defines us versus others.
- Play can be communal or personal.
- Play constructs playful identities.

Accordingly, play illustrates a wide spectrum of characteristics, from the trivial to the serious; it can be very abstract and ambiguous, initiated from everyday routine things and experiences or something totally different from our past experiences. It can be argued therefore that play, more than being a temporary mode in human

childhood or an emotion, is a crucial mode of behaviour or an approach towards things and phenomena.

2.2 Play and product design

Clarifying the meaning of play through the concepts of emotion, pleasure and enjoyment in this section will provide a framework to define and challenge playfulness in product design. To achieve this, postmodernism, as an umbrella term for the concept of playful design, will be explored briefly. I articulate my understanding of postmodernism mainly based on the views of two American architects and architecture theorists, Robert Venturi and Charles Jencks.

Postmodern product design

There is not a straightforward definition for postmodernism and I do not intend to define the postmodern situation and its complex meanings and variations in art and culture but among different versions of it, there are two themes that penetrate my arguments. The first is when postmodernism gives meaning to the current situation of societies in the West; a change of culture and meaning based on the consumption of new media technologies and secondly, postmodernism as a style in design and product design. One cannot open any discussion about playful qualities of our lives without dismissing the rationalism of modernism and believing in ‘pluralism’ and ‘polysemy’ (Ward, 2003). Postmodernism questions the idea that there is only one inherent meaning to an object, and instead, it is open to experiences, pluralism, contrast and differences in history, culture and identity (Ward, 2003). Postmodernism is concerned that happiness and satisfaction cannot be pursued only by following technological developments and there should be other elements in our lives meaningful to individuals, and their culture such as tradition, nostalgia, wit, parody and play.

In Design, postmodernism conveys a way of thinking which rejects the simplicity of modernism and puts the emphasis on more effective communication of an artefact with different groups of people through recognising differences and contradictions. Postmodernism, as a style, embraces social realities, cultural changes and local significances. In design, it is identified by symbolism and the importance of the

cultural elements of aesthetics as opposed to the unification, rationalisation and functional values of modernism. Postmodern ideas are associated with irony and the anti-design values pursued in the design of the 1980s. Once, Venturi expressed his appreciation for postmodern design by saying, ‘I like complexity and contradiction in architecture’ (Venturi, 1977, p.16). He rejected, utterly, the simplicity and direct messages designed in modern structures and believed in the duality and ambiguity in meanings that leave space for interpretations and personal understanding. He demonstrated his preference for the combination of ‘both-and’ to ‘either-or’ (Venturi, 1977, p.16). For him, designed products can transmit dual meanings, an artefact can be both ornamental and functional, both traditional and modern, both technological and archaic. Similarly, Jencks articulated his ideas of postmodernism by defining it as a style that embraces different cultural tastes. According to Jencks, postmodernism can be recognised by some tactics such as ‘irony, parody, displacement, complexity, eclecticism or realism’ (Jencks, 1984) in contemporary designs.

Referring to Ettore Sottsass as a pioneer in postmodern product design, it is clear that postmodernism is identified by the juxtaposition of different elements and styles. Consider the example of the Carlton bookcase (Figure 2-4). It is designed to demonstrate that a bookcase can be colourful and decorative and its form, figuratively, conveys the symbols of the old archetypes. The messages transmitted through this artefact are beyond its utilitarian role. It produces emotions. It is an iconic element of furniture whose presence one cannot easily ignore.



Figure 2-4: Carlton bookcase for Memphis by Ettore Sottsass (1981)

With the emergence of digitalisation and new technologies, postmodern ideas have become more exploitable by designers. The main aim in designing new products is to provide a better level of communication besides its functioning; hence the emphasis on the meaning of a product has become more and more important. In postmodernism, secondary and tertiary meanings within the initial aim of design have been discussed. For the sake of this research, I assume play as that secondary or tertiary meaning or that the hidden feature can be found in a functional object. Playfulness, for me, is that ‘both-and’ of Venturi. I imagine the object of utility with playful and entertainment values, both functional and playful; a product that can communicate on different levels, including the playful. This fits perfectly with the idea of postmodernism, especially when play, irony and parody are the essential and known characteristics of postmodern design. This can be reinforced by acknowledging that new technologies have changed the world we know and ourselves, and ‘technologically mediated identities are playful’ (De Lange, 2010).

Design and emotions

The first serious discussions relating to play in product design emerged in the general context of emotions. The ergonomist, Patrick Jordan (1967-) and the design researcher, Donald Norman (1935-) were among the first who tried to identify playfulness in product design through their research on pleasurable and emotional aspects of products.

Jordan in his book, ‘*Designing Pleasurable Products*’ in 2000 and afterwards, as the editor of ‘*Pleasure with Products: Beyond Usability*’ in 2002, pursued the issue of pleasure in designed products. According to him, the levels of pleasure in products can be known as ‘physio, socio, psycho and ideo pleasures’ (Jordan, 2000).

- **Physio-pleasure** which is through the body and sensory organs.
- **Socio-pleasure** is derived from relationships with others. Association with other types of products may indicate belonging to a social group: Porche for ‘Yuppies’, Dr Martin’s boots for skinheads.
- **Psycho-pleasure** pertains to people’s cognitive and emotional reactions.
- **Ideo-pleasure** relates to people’s value.

Jordan's classification of pleasure would fit with play, in some aspects. However, because he focuses only on the emotional aspects of products, the initial thought would be the neglect of play as one of the main sources of pleasure and elicitation of positive emotions. His classification would have been more useful if he had explained the position of 'pleasure' in relation to other positive emotions and play. For example, Csikszimihaly's definition of pleasure makes it clear that the term would only be appropriate to use in defining the non-conscious levels of interactions and as soon as some level of consciousness is engaged, we need to use other terms.

Setting Jordan's inaccuracy in the usage of the term to one side, it can also be argued that the socio-level in this classification specifically refers to the cultural aspects of consumption rather than referring to the active role of products in shaping new institutions and concepts in societies. The situation he describes is pointing to the more passive adoption of a product, whilst new media technologies have more self-reflexive and constructive qualities and brought new formats of organisations and institutions which cannot be explained by the former concepts. In fact, whilst people do identify themselves through products, it is new media technologies which provide this identification through a series of active interactions; interactions using mobile phones nowadays, are much more active and self-constructive than television, for example.

The evidence of this cultural transformation can be observed through emergent ideas and terminologies among the younger generations. For instance, 'playlistism' which for a generation today carries a new sort of discrimination that judges individuals according to their taste in music and their iPod playlists and not their gender, religion or ethnic groups (Kahney, 2005).

With regard to pleasure and design, a more inclusive review was constructed by Norman. His notion of pleasure depends on three main levels. He argues that eliciting pleasure can be based on: 1) visceral 2) behavioural and 3) reflective levels (Norman, 2004) respectively, the automatic level assessed by human senses, processed by the brain and finally processed by the contemplative part of their brains. The visceral level is the basic one, it automatically gives information about

things, if they are good and bad, dangerous and safe, while the behavioural level initiates from one's past memories and experiences, based on routine activities even though unconsciously, and if it comes to the conscious level it is reflective and rooted in the culture and individual preferences. The latter takes account of an emotional reflection on things and events and it is the most complicated one of the three. To provide a comparison between Norman and Jordan's levels of pleasure, one can consider the physio-pleasures as being classified as visceral; psycho-pleasures are behavioural; socio-pleasures are behavioural and reflective and ideo-pleasures are just reflective (Norman, 2004, p.105). Norman believes designers, by considering reflective pleasures which have socio-cultural roots, can go for long-lasting pleasures in products. He explains that sometimes designers assign reflective levels to products' features despite the lack of behavioural satisfaction to be had from them. As an example, he refers to the functional failure of the 'celebrity' Juicy Salif by Philippe Starck (1949-), launched for Alessi in 1989. Alberto Alessi, in complimenting this 'iconic postmodern' (Julier, 2000) artefact, said its birth gave a headache to the flagbearers of *form follows function*. More surprisingly, Starck himself confesses that it was not intended as primarily a working device, 'it is meant to start conversations' (Norman, 2004, pp. 112, 113.)

Finally, Norman asks, 'how may a design maintain its effectiveness even after long acquaintance?' (Norman, 2004) He concludes that a lifelong pleasurable design requires two main characteristics: one, the object must be rich and complex, which is in the hands of designers and two, the compatibility of this complexity has to be matched with the skill of the user. He believes products that will succeed are those that follow this seduction process. Norman's argument about pleasurable design leads on to and is limited by seduction which, to me, is a fallacy because he believes in emotions as a strong and an appropriate apparatus to arouse the users. There is much distance between seduction and the reflexive quality that he is talking about. Norman's argument would have been much more useful if he had differentiated between the mentioned positive emotions, considered the difference between pleasure, enjoyment and fun, for instance; and moreover, if he had assigned a specific niche to the concept of play. Although he has some notions about

playfulness (mostly with regard to some of the Alessi products), they are treated in the same way as the emotions such as fun and joy and not seen as a constructively positive interaction. Yes, being playful elicits emotions but as it was argued before, play goes beyond that.

The 1980s presents an important decade in terms of product design and play as there was a move towards so-called playful mass production in the market place. Its precedent can perhaps be traced back to forays created by some artists in the early decades of the 20th century since modern art has also embraced ludic and playful practices. The first readymade objects by Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) in 1915 and then by Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Alexander Calder (1898-1976), demonstrate that meanings of objects are partly subjective and the object's identity is not a fixed ever-lasting entity. In the artistic platform *Lobster Telephone* (Figure 2-5) by the surrealist Salvador Dali (1904-89) and Edward James (1907-84) in 1936, it places ludic and playful qualities beside its surreal references, for the first time in the history of functional objects.



Figure 2-5: Lobster Telephone by Salvador Dali and Edward James (1938)

Followed by the motto of *form follows fun* (Verbeek, 2005), a series of amusing-looking artefacts were introduced to the design world. The promoter of the motto, the Spanish designer Javier Mariscal (1950-) made *Garriris chair* (Figure 2-6) in 1987 which was inspired by the cartoon character Mickey Mouse. Later on, in 1991, the new

celebrity Mickey Mouse appeared again in the design of Michael Graves' (1934-) *Mickey Mouse Tea Kettle* (Figure 2-7). Aligned with this trend, a significant step was taken by Alessi (Sparke, 2004, p. 174) and followed by other companies in Europe, Japan and some areas of South Eastern Asia, such as Taiwan or Hong Kong. In the 1990s, Alessi started many projects with a bias towards emotional design; among them, the metaproject, *Family Follows Fiction*, which has had huge (and continuing) success in the retail sector and has been well received by design critics.



Figure 2-6: Garriris chair by Javier Mariscal (1987)



Figure 2-7: Mickey Mouse teakettle by Michael Graves (1991)

In 1994, four Philips Alessi-branded kitchen appliances were on the market; a filter coffee maker, a kettle, a lemon squeezer and a toaster (Figure 2-8) (Poletti, 1994) (Poletti, Zanotta, 2004). These kitchen appliances were visually very rich and aesthetically important. They had curvy, feminine forms with soft, low-intensity warm colours such as yellow, red and green, which give a positive emotional boost and appear very cheerful at first glance, the quality sought by many consumers

involved in domestic activities. The aim of these design efforts was to bring some happiness, charm and a smile to the kitchen (Poletti, 1994, p.52) or as Stefano Marzano, the head of Corporate Design at Philips at that time said, it was about 'rehumanising the kitchen' (Poletti, 1994, p. 206).



Figure 2-8: Toaster, kettle and lemon squeezer from the Philips-Alessi Collaboration (1994)

This design trend from that time has been followed by many other companies around Europe such as Braun, Moulinex and Tefal. These companies have given another face to kitchenware in Europe and disseminated their products all over the world. Since 1990, in the Centro Studio Alessi Research Centre, they have continued their collaboration with top designers from all over the world and believed it is one of the most important future directions for their company (Alessi, 1998).

According to Spark, these efforts 'reinforce Alessi's cultural programme [... and go] beyond utilitarian functions' (Sparke, 2004, p. 174). Other critics describe such objects as emotional (according to Norman, they evoke 'positive emotions' (Norman, 2004)), they are 'cute', 'playful, affectionate, communicative' (Mendini and Niesewand, 1994, p.86) funny and witty which give 'deep, long lasting pleasure' (Norman, 2004, p.104); along with providing meanings and enjoyment which offer users a greater sense of attachment (Schifferstein and Zwartkruis-Pelgrim, 2008).

The background to this success, according to many scholars, was a shift from sheer functionality to the more cultural aspects of design which was led by postmodern designers and the avant-garde movements of the late 1960s such as Pop and Anti-design (Julier, 2000, p.78; Sparke, 2004, p.172). From that time, the need for more than functionality has been an issue pursued by both users and designers. This

direction change was accompanied by other socio-cultural events which provided the potential for the creation of playful objects and designs. Jordan describes such trends in product design by explaining his observation from Domotechnica 1999, Europe's premier house-ware show. He notes:

Increasingly, manufacturers are creating household product in designs that contain an element of humour. ... Manufacturers were displaying an array of kitchen appliances, vacuum cleaners and irons in fun forms and with playful colour execution. This reflects the current taste in Northern Europe and North America. Many women in these societies see household tasks as chores and enjoy products that, through their fun designs, can go some way towards brightening a dull experience. (Jordan, 2000, p.55)

He also hypothesises that on the contrary, this situation may not be desirable for women in other parts of the world, such as Southern Europe and America [or Asia]. Such designs may be acknowledged as 'frivolous even disrespectful' in those cultures and the 'humorous' quality of those devices may be observed as 'mocking or trivialising' cooking and housework (Jordan, 2000, p.56).

Although his thesis represents the significance of cultural issues in perceiving and conceiving objects, it is a generalisation and I challenge his belief by questioning the extent to which there are women in Western societies that enjoy fun designs in products and believe that they will brighten the dull experience of domestic chores. Just by referring to market sales, exhibitions and design trends, it cannot be concluded that these items satisfy the users in that respect. They are indeed open to the world of fantasy and imagination but how can *playful colours* and *fun designs* brighten dull house chores? Can such designs be called 'playful' and represent playful design? Are they not limited by their functions which can confront the playfulness quality? What do people expect from such objects and how do they deal with their utilitarian function? What is of particular interest to my research is that whilst such artefacts are intended to provide desirable features; comfort, joy and happiness, I do not believe that they have challenged the core issues of appliances. In other words, in terms of playfulness, they just present a visual attraction/distraction and are kind on the eye.

Toy-shaped and playful artefacts were discussed as the extension of safety and happiness in childhood. These offer some comfort in human emotions and suggest fantasy and emotional values in daily life but do not support the other qualities one might expect from play. Again, it is relevant to ask the same question: Would it be fair to call them playful? Where does creativity sit in terms of playfulness? How about the constructive quality of play?

Examining such thoughts about playfulness, in 2007, Wen-chih Chang from the Graduate School of Design, National Taiwan University of Science and Technology and Tyan-Yu Wu from the Department of Industrial Design, Chang Gung University, interviewed thirty young participants in Taiwan. They used visual and tactile methods to describe the characteristics of kitchen and household appliances produced by Alessi, Philips and other brand leaders (Figure 2-9). The aim of their research was 'to find out how different types of pleasurable forms are used in different types of household products' (Chang and Wu, 2007). They concluded that the visual elements of design such as colour, material and shape have a crucial effect in eliciting consumer pleasure. In their research, they benefitted from research by Martin Seligman (1942-) in 2002, on authentic happiness, which identified two levels of pleasure: bodily pleasure and higher pleasure. In that research, Seligman declared that bodily pleasure has an immediate quality with a temporary sensory response. Senses such as taste, smell, sight, and hearing can evoke bodily pleasures briefly and at once but higher pleasures involve a more complicated process in understanding since they deal with the contents. According to this categorisation, a consumer may experience pleasure from perceiving a product's appearance and its embodied meaning. In other words, the user may feel pleasure on perceiving a product with an interesting appearance, and furthermore, may also experience another level of pleasure in understanding the content of the product's appearance (Seligman, 2002 quoted in Chang & Wu , 2007).



Figure 2-9: Samples used in the interviews by Chang and Wu

Following this, Chang and Wu classified the sample products into five categories, which were aesthetic, bio, cultural, novelty and ideo forms, according to the interviewees' perceived form, colour and material. According to the participants, the pleasure evoked from physical and visual interactions of some products is something they like to share with their friends and this can be expressed socially. For example, in the case of the *Magic Bunny* toothpick holder (Figure 2-9, sample 5), participants found it a good 'medium' which brings 'playful interaction [to] the dining table' and allows imagination (Chang, Wu, 2007). In addition, samples 1, 3, 6 and 16 in Figure 2-9 are other kitchen products that are considered as 'playful' mainly due to their social encouragement, the inspiration of imagination and the experience of pleasure (Chang, Wu, 2007).

Chang and Wu classify these toy-shaped products, which encourage social and playful interaction, as the cultural form of pleasure. According to them, 'the playful effect is the characteristic of a product by which it plays the role of an interesting object in the home. Kitchen products, therefore, can become part of the social media of the kitchen, and interactive objects to satiate interactive desires in the kitchen' (Chang, Wu, 2007).

These objects are visually saturated with forms and colours, however, Overbeeke noted 'a smile in a user's heart' cannot be matched by the smile on a product (Overbeeke et al, 2004, p.9) and in this way, he criticised the superficiality in the

design of some products such as *Mangiauvo egg holder* (Figure 1-3) or *Anna G corkscrew* (Figure 2-9, sample 3) by Alessi.

An alternative trend is offered in the following statement by Gijs Bakker, one of the Droog designers: ‘form does not interest me’ (Van Zijl and Boyer, 1997, p.9). This is a comment intended to demonstrate Droog Design’s social and communicative preferences in product design. This trend away from form, with the aim of developing the national design appearance of the time, was established in order to open consumers’ experience to new concepts without the concerns of the market place. (Paradoxically, now they have received many commissions from international firms and ‘moved into a front-line position in the market’)(Ramakers, Bakker, 1998). Droog Design does not follow any particular design manifesto but by not ‘being part of the dominant culture’ of design, it tries to ‘challenge this culture.’ (Ramakers, Bakker, 1998) This kind of design has variously been described as ‘ecological, Dadaist, *humorous* or minimalist’ (van Zijl, Boyer, 1997). In other words, by bridging design and art, it helps a new way of thinking to emerge.

Although no new forms were created in the majority of Droog products, the juxtaposition of current and familiar forms gives them a new look and sometimes, they are interpreted as playful. For example, *The Doorbell* by Peter van der Jagt (Figure 2-10), is a creative combination of traditional electromagnet doorbell with two wineglasses, hanging upside down.



Figure 2-10: The Doorbell by Peter van der Jagt (1994)

Jasper Morrison, the English designer, comments that Droog's approach to the form of the object is more exciting because they attempt to create visually exciting artefacts by using things that already exist 'in a different way' (Ramakers, Bakker, 1998, p.35). In this way, he criticises designers for their obsessions with 'an attractive new form' (Ramakers, Bakker, 1998, p.35). This application of things being used *in a different way* is a challenge not only for functionality by sending confusing messages and making its usage ambiguous, but also, because it reduces the 'serious' quality of objects. In other words, they invite playful engagement. As is clear in the Droog examples, playfulness is evident in the function as well as in the forms although they emphasise that form does not interest them.

The definition of product design by the Industrial Design Society of America (Idsa) emphasises the importance of function and form equally. According to their definition, product design or industrial design 'is the professional service of creating and developing concepts and specifications that optimize the function, value and appearance of products and systems for the mutual benefit of both user and manufacturer' (IDSA, 2010). In this definition, functionality and appearance (form) are the two most important elements in designing products. However, as I will argue in this research, the binary of form and function is not a case for every designer, for the benefit of this research, this involves playfulness. Form, in the case of Droog products, playfully challenges visual culture, leads the observer to the domain of symbols and meanings and makes one think about forms, functions and usages, from something obsolescent to the new and unexpected.

Klaus Krippendorf, Professor of Cybernetics, Language, and Culture at the University of Pennsylvania, explains this beyond functionality and aesthetics as a 'semantic turn' which embeds 'more social, political, and cultural concerns' such as cultural identity instead of the previous 'functional, aesthetic, and market considerations' (Krippendorf, 2006, xvii). He attributes the shift to the Ulm School of Design of the 1970s and believes recent concerns regarding the importance of language and other cultural symbols have influenced the interpretation towards societies and technology; and built 'a new foundation for design' which searches for meanings (Krippendorff, 2006).

On a more engaging level, product design researchers, such as Overbeeke, Hummels, Philip Roland Ross, Stephan Wensveen, Tom Djajadiningrat and Joep Frens, Mark Blythe, Marc Hassenzahl, William Gaver, Andrew Monk and Peter Wright, try to challenge the dominant concepts in product design. They challenge the functionality and aesthetics in products by introducing new concepts such as ‘usability’ (Overbeeke et al., 2004), ‘quality in use’ (Ehn and Lowgren, 1997, quoted in Wright et al., 2004), and the ‘aesthetics of interaction’ (Hummels, 2002, Overbeeke et al., 2004).

In general, ‘usability is the first level of any design goal’ (Carroll and Mentis, 2008, p.499). While usability, traditionally, deals with ‘logical dialogue using speech recognition, through grouping and colour coding of buttons with related functions, through adding displays with an abundance of text and icons, and through writing logically structured manuals’ (Carroll, Mentis, 2008, p.500), design scholars such as Monk (2002), Blythe and Wright (2003) have tried to extend its dimension to more emotional domains or others, such as Norman, Hummels and Overbeeke, by introducing new dimensions for aesthetics to try to develop other concepts in order to confront usability and point to its inefficiency.

In 1994, the Standards Organisation, as quoted in 2008 by Professor John M. Carroll and his student, Helena M. Mentis, from the School of Information Sciences and Technology at Pennsylvania State University, defined usability as follows: ‘The usability of a product is the degree to which specific users can achieve specific goals within a particular environment; effectively, efficiently, comfortably, and in an acceptable manner.’ This definition leaves room for the consideration of emotional and cultural elements in product usage although ease and comfort in use are the main focus (Carroll, Mentis, 2008).

However, in *Pleasure with product: Beyond usability*, usability was discussed in a chapter by Jan Noyes and Richard Littledale, two psychologists from the Department of Experimental Psychology at the University of Bristol. In that research, playfulness is introduced as an element beyond usability. The authors examine playfulness in the context of computer usage and its positive and subjective role for users (Noyes and

Littledale, 2002). In, *Beauty in Usability: Forget about Ease of Use!*, there is an attempt to redefine usability:

Current efforts on improving usability focus on making things easier. However, there is more to usability than ease of use. A user may choose to work with a product despite it being difficult to use, because it is challenging, seductive, playful, surprising, memorable or rewarding, resulting in enjoyment of the experience. (Overbeeke et al., 2008)

In addition, the authors reject beauty in terms of appearance and emphasise the value of beauty in interaction. They quote from Anthony Dunne who talked about ‘an aesthetics of use’ which, through the interactivity made possible by computing, seeks to develop a more nuanced cooperation with the object - a cooperation which, it is hoped, will enhance social contact and everyday experience.’ (Overbeeke et al., 2008)

This inclusive way of defining aesthetics in product design can be questioned further as to whether it includes playful interactions. With the emphasis on enhancing social aspects of aesthetics in design, *Designing Behaviour in Interaction: Using Aesthetic Experience as a Mechanism for Design*, argues for the notion of ‘aesthetic interaction’ which consists of four principles: ‘1) practical use next to intrinsic value, 2) social and ethical dimensions, 3) a satisfying dynamic form, and 4) active engagements of people through body, cognitive, emotional and social skills (Ross and Wensveen, 2010). These principles give more credit to the users’ preferences and subjective matters. A satisfying form and experiencing aesthetics can include playful designs in order to be compatible to users’ social and emotional skills. As such, it is worth examining the extent to which aesthetic interaction can be connected to the issue of playfulness.

2.3 Aesthetics of interactions

Hummels, in her PhD dissertation in 2000, introduced the concept of ‘Aesthetics of Interaction’ (Hummels, 2000) (AoI) as a holistic solution that encompasses different layers of interactions. This concept will be used as a framework for defining playful engagements with products. In subsequent publications, the notion of AoI has been promoted. Those who do explain how contemplating the context of and our personal

relations with products can lead to a successful design and satisfy users' sense of beauty (Overbeeke et al., 2004). In '*Funology: from Usability to Enjoyment*' (2004), in a chapter entitled *Let's Make Things Engaging*, they explain their thesis:

Users are not interested in products; they are in search of challenging experiences. Therefore the designer needs to create a context for experience, rather than just a product. He offers the user a context in which he may enjoy a film, a dinner, cleaning, playing, working, *with all his senses*. (Overbeeke et al., 2004)

According to them, aesthetics is not a one-dimensional interaction with a product that is reduced to a visual or other sensory pleasure. On the contrary, it is a multi-level interaction which promotes usability. They categorise five different levels of engagement:

- The functional possibilities and performance of the product
- The users' desires, needs, interests and skills (perceptual, motor, cognitive and emotional)
- General context
- Richness with respect to all the senses
- The possibility to create one's own story and ritual (Overbeeke et al., 2004)

This categorisation demonstrates that AoI does not tend to make things easier or simpler, but considers products in different contexts; it emphasises a 'shift from a beautiful appearance to beautiful interaction' which goes beyond cognitive skills and perception. It holds skills, interests and memories and leaves users with an enjoyable experience (Overbeeke et al., 2004, pp.8, 9). Based on this notion of interaction, which claims to provide 'a strong case for engagement as a means to augment fun and beauty' (Overbeeke et al., 2004, p.10), the playful aspects of interactions might be articulated. Playfulness can be that context which a designer creates to provide a different experience of use. As such, any aspects of AoI in regard to play are then examined.

Play and functional possibilities and the performance of a product

Good performance in the function of a product means a step forward towards AoI. Hummels explains that the 'proper function' for a product is a basic requirement for AoI (Hummels, 2000). Nevertheless, it is important to ask: what is meant here by

proper function? Do all the products we keep and enjoy using have *proper functions*? Does the question refer to utilitarian functionality or functionality and utility versus usability? How about playful functions?

We tend to prioritise our functional needs, yet a vegetable peeler might still be used despite its broken handle and it is not necessarily for economical reasons alone that we defer buying a new peeler. It could be for the associated memories that it carries, because its sharp blade is still performing well or the environmental concerns one believes in prevents the object from being discarded. These issues lead to the second category which is about users' desires, needs, interests and skills. But before discussing that, it is necessary to consider how play can combine with the functional possibilities in AoI.

On first impression, utilitarian functionality and play cannot be conceived of easily together as normally, serious matters and playfulness operate separately. However, a new definition of play supporting such a combination is emerging. As Salen and Zimmerman remarked (see page 36), functional systems allow some forms of play to occur within their boundaries. From a different perspective, scholar in interactive design, Marc Hassenzahl, in his article, *The Thing and I: Understanding the Relationship between User and Product* (Hassenzahl, 2004), argues that play and function can combine in some situations. To support this claim, he introduces 'usage modes', which itself is indebted to the British psychologist Michael J. Apter's work on 'reversal theory' (1989). Usage mode is a user state of mind and consists of two modes of goal and action (Diagram 2-4). He believes this presentation of goal and action mode is 'certainly a more helpful distinction between ways of approaching a product than the classical 'tool' and 'toy' or 'leisure' and 'work'- dichotomy' (Hassenzahl, 2004). He notes both modes around the product can be active and receive relative priority. In this way, he posits the pragmatic (utilitarian functions) and hedonistic aspects of products next to each other. Goal and action modes are situational, and it depends on the situation whether they get priority. In goal mode, actions are directed to reach the goal and in action mode, no goal is specifically pursued as the action and experience of the action are prioritised; the first is more efficient and focused and the second is more 'playful' and 'spontaneous' (Hassenzahl, 2004).

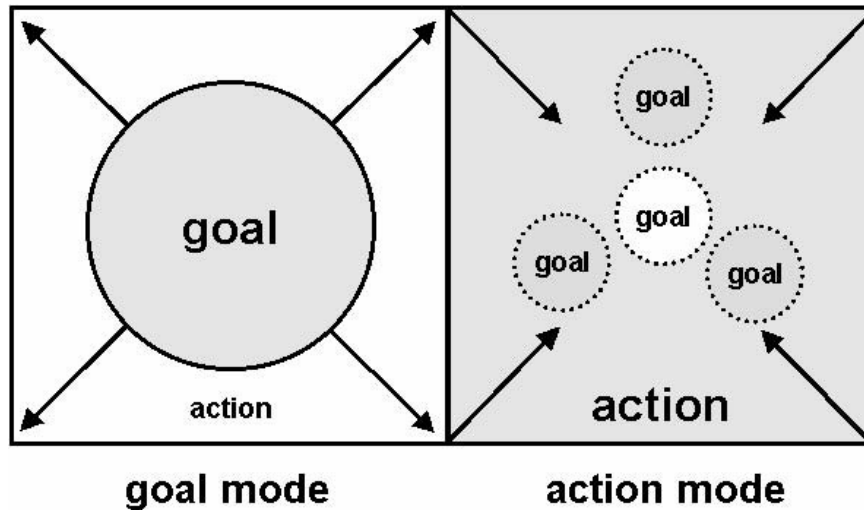


Diagram 2-4: Goal and action modes in ‘usage mode’ by Hassenzahl

Taking this argument to its logical conclusion, it can be argued that any playful aspect in a system has two sides. One is a degree of freedom that the system provides such that play happens and designers tend to explore in their designs and the other is a playful situation or mode that users can create and demonstrate. As such, users have a significant role in the degree of playful function and engagement and I believe it is better to use a term which can include this aspect as well. Whilst Kücklich uses the term ‘playability’ (Kücklich, 2003) in digital game research to explain play and its challenges with regard to players’ abilities, playability in product design can define playfulness in a product with regard to the capacity and ability of the users to shift between two modes of play and not play.

For the benefit of this research, one can think about playability in a product as the degree of freedom that the functional system provides for play to happen in regard to a user who can conceive and embody it. Thus, for designers, it is always important to investigate users’ interests, skills and abilities whilst they consider different possible functions of products. This is something that will be explored when discussing the second level of the AoI. Designers have tried to locate and use those possibilities in order to create playful products. The example of the *Defendius Labyrinth Security Lock*, (Figure 2-11) the maze door chain lock by [Art Lebedev Studio](#), demonstrates how the function of an object with a *serious* function can be merged with

encouraging playful behaviour. Most people are familiar with maze games but never expect to see one on a door. The designer replaced the regular horizontal slot of the chain lock with a maze shape and challenged the usage of the lock. Now, anyone who wants to open the door and release the pin has to engage with game/play behaviour; getting out is as difficult as getting in.



Figure 2-11: The Defendius Labyrinth Security Lock

Similarly, *The Drift Table* (Figure 2-12), which is an electronic coffee table, is designed in a way to be a ‘toy for adults’¹ and encourages some fun and play to happen. Basically, this coffee table displays slowly moving aerial photography controlled by the distribution of weight on its surface (Gaver et al., 2004). In so doing, one can map the home of the owner or other places easily by putting objects on this table. It is clear how the function of a coffee table as a table becomes peripheral when it comes to its playful function. As such, modes of functions can easily switch according to the mode of users. In other words, the playability of this artefact can be defined according to the mode and character of the users.

¹ Borrowed from Professor Neil Cox’s lecture entitled *Picasso’s ‘Toys for Adults’: Cubism as Surrealism* presented in 2008 at the National Gallery of Scotland where he investigated one of Picasso’s collages. He is a specialist in 20th-century art in France.



Figure 2-12: The Drift Table (2003) from the Threshold Devices Project

On the other hand, in some other experimental designed products, examples with specific functions or performances can be found such that it would be hard to assign them any utilitarian function other than playful. The interactivity in the mentioned example of *The Plane Tracker* is dissimilar to *The Drift Table*. Despite its freedom from all the utilitarian functions people are familiar with, *The Plane Tracker* does not give an active role to the user despite sparking one's imagination and curiosity. It is not interactive in the sense of engaging the user with a practice but instead it engages the user in subjective play; it is an instrument used to expand the owners' imagination and is a medium of distraction and entertainment.

In order to include this sort of play, distraction and entertainment characteristics in the functional possibility and performance of Hummels' idea, functionality needs to be redefined. As discussed in *The Security Lock*, *The Drift Table* and *The Plane Tracker*, functions might defer the task, become peripheral, or come with no known usage. Playful function and playability can be the appropriate concepts that respond to such challenges for functionality.

Play and the users' desires, needs, interests and skills (perceptual, motor, cognitive and emotional)

On the second level of AoI, beauty is defined in relation to the user's desires, needs, interests and skills. Utilitarian function is not very effective when it does not consider people's interests and emotional status. Practically, by just focusing on optimisation and ease of use, designers cannot guarantee a successful product. Usability, as

mentioned before, tends to embrace more intangible factors to satisfy users. The first examples of attempting to go beyond functionality were created by postmodernist designers who followed the motto of ‘form follows culture’ (Skolimowski, 1981) which recognises the individual’s preferences. This shift was acknowledged not only by aesthetics researchers but also by other scholars such as Jordan and Norman. Past experiences and the skills of the user are considered as important elements in the design of products. Things embrace different meanings and attributes depending on the user’s skills and experiences. A chef’s understanding of knives would be different from a non-professional user. Similarly, the degree of pleasure a professional enjoys from kitchen appliances would also be different. The perception of details changes in terms of needs, desires, interests and skills. These are the elements deeply connected to emotions and the elicitation of joy and pleasure. As such, Hummels and her colleagues consider these elements contribute greatly to AoI.

Play can have a role in each of these elements: the users’ desires, needs, interests and skills. The desire for play is believed to be an instinct in human beings (Huizinga, 1948; Else, 2009, p.11). The dullness and boredom of serious matters gives meaning to playfulness. People’s experience with a product is not always satisfying in terms of ease and comfort (Overbeeke et. al, 2004) and as Pierre-Henri Dejean, the design researcher, explains in *Difficulties and Pleasure?* (Dejean, 2002), the pleasure one expects from the experience of use can come with some difficulties, such as the pleasure someone might have from upholding certain ethical or religious values. Recycling, for example, can be pleasurable as much as difficult for people. Or the more skilful people are in doing things, the more they look for a complicated and difficult process and consequently, they associate ease of use with a negative connotation, especially in terms of play and games (Dejean, 2002). Playability, as discussed earlier, defines the relationship between the player and the quality and degree of playfulness in a product. As such, it seems appropriate to conclude that playability in a product is partly defined according to the user’s desires, needs, interests and skills. What is not included in this aspect of AoI, which I discussed earlier, are the past experiences and memories of the users which can make products more desirable and aesthetically valuable.

In terms of desires, needs, interests and skills, playfulness suggests an open-ended and flexible quality to objects which makes a product compatible with different usage and meaning. As the example of *The Rock Cushions* (Figure 2-13) illustrates, the unconventional design of the cushions will make them desirable and playful objects, ready to use for different purposes, needs and interests.



Figure 2-13: The Rock Cushions by Ronel Jordaan (2004)

Following the notion of the ludification of societies and assuming individuals as playful characters in society, it is relevant to ask: What is the AoI response to playful desires, needs, interests and skills of people? Obviously, people with a stronger sense of play have different desires and needs that have to be satiated.

Playful with regards to context

Things are conceived of in their context. The context limits the number of meanings that can be assigned to objects. It also helps us to differentiate things with different functions. (Krippendorff, 2006). In *Semantics: Meanings and Contexts of Artefacts*, a whole section is allocated to 'artefacts and their various contexts' (Krippendorff and Butter, 2008). Here the authors argue that as artefacts are man-made, and therefore unlike natural phenomena, they need a context in which to become meaningful to us:

Artefacts are made, not found, and the distinction between them and their contexts is an intentional act, and so are considerations of how they are related. Attributing meaning to artefacts is a way of rendering the relationships between artefacts and their contexts sensible and coherent (Krippendorff and Butter, 2008, p.362).

The importance of the context in perceiving the meaning of a product has been acknowledged in product design from different perspectives. Krippendorff emphasises the emergence of meaning, while other authors highlight ease of use (Norman, 1999) or unfold future possibilities via ultimate use (Gaver et al., 2003). Therefore, one of the designers' efforts should be to study and contemplate the context of use according to different users. This is a process that Norman and Gaver prefer to call 'perceived affordance' as opposed to 'real affordance' (Norman, 1999) or 'hidden affordance' (Gaver, 1991); the first defines the relationship between what, physically and practically, is assigned to the artefacts, whilst the other explores what can emerge in the users' hand, and accounts for more unpredictable events not intended by designers but can affect the user's experiment with the product (Overbeeke et. al, 2004, Hummels, 2002).

The theory of affordance was first introduced by the perceptual psychologist J.J. Gibson. His idea was taken up later in product design and developed by Norman under the form of 'perceived affordance' (Norman, 1999) although he takes an opposing direction. Affordance, in Gibson's theory, is about potential usages not considered in the initial design by the designer. Gaver prefers to call it hidden affordance to differentiate it from perceived affordance in Norman's work, which is totally under the control of the designer. In Figure 2-14, an empty bottle is illustrated in unthought-of usages and demonstrates the hidden affordance of a bottle. For the benefit of this research, later on in this chapter, in taxonomy of playfulness, I discuss 'affording play' which is my free adaptation of this concept (see page 95).



Figure 2-14: An empty bottle can afford to be a candle holder, rack for gloves or flower vase

Gestalt Theory explains how the concept of things becomes shaped in a human's mind relative to their backgrounds. Through this process, we can recognise and differentiate things. To explain the context, it is appropriate to cite an example from a [video clip](#) which is about an iPad that is gifted to a father. The scene starts with a normal conversation in a kitchen between a young woman and her father. The woman, enthusiastically, is asking her father how he is coping with the new iPad he received as his birthday present. Her father, who is busy chopping some vegetables and is immersed in his job, finishes the task and takes a sleek chopping board near to a pan and it is then that we notice it is not a chopping board but the iPad. He, without saying a word, cleans the iPad and puts it in the washing machine while his bewildered daughter contemplates what has been happening to it. This comic clip simply shows that things without their context of use can be approached differently.

The change of context, as illustrated in the extreme example of the iPad clip, can make a funny and playful situation. Actually, it is the unexpected usage of the product which creates the playful moment. Designing the context, or taking a product to a new context, is about navigating through those free spaces such that any system allows play to happen (see the reference to Salen and Zimmerman's definition of play on page 36). For example, using a comb to hold a nail while driving the nail in

the wall, in order to avoid hitting your hand is a new application for the comb which seems unconventional, innovative and playful as much as practical.



Figure 2-15: An innovative application for a comb

Recognising the object shown in Figure 2-16 as a draining rack, for example, without providing the viewer with context would be much harder than identifying a more familiar-style draining rack. Besides, such an ambiguity allows you to use it in other ways, for any purposes that one might find useful.



Figure 2-16: Draining rack

One of the aforementioned aspects of play is its connection to creativity. As such, the creative usage of things and the change of context of use can be considered as play, either from the designer or user's point of view. Based on these arguments, I believe that this component in AoI can perfectly match with playful aspects of the products I aim to define.

Playful richness with respect to all the senses

Hummels contends that aesthetic interaction considers the involvement of all the senses; from vision to smell, hearing, touch, taste and kinaesthetic (Hummels, 2000; Overbeeke et al., 2004). These are the assets with which designers can engage to enrich users' experience with products. Engaging a different level of the senses has always been very important for designers (Chapman, 2009; McDonagh, 2004; Norman, 2004). However, as discussed earlier, vision has been more involved in design engagements than any other sense. 'By far the most prominent sensory system in perception research, and maybe the most dominant modality in our experience of the world, is the visual system' (Hekkert, 2006).

While, traditionally, vision is mostly used as a stimulus for interactive engagements, other senses such as hearing and touch have become the focus for some designers. Pieter Desmet, Professor of Design Aesthetics at Delft University of Technology, in collaboration with Rick Porcelijn and M. B. van Dijk from KVD Reframing and Design in Amsterdam, demonstrate how human senses and perception contribute to build a 'wow' factor in a design. They argue that the 'design for wow' is a 'combination of different positive emotions such as fascination, pleasant surprise, and desire' (Desmet, Porcelijn & van Dijk, 2007). This is a quality which many designers are looking for and try to include in their designs as part of aesthetic enhancement or as Hassenzahl categorised it, an 'experiential approach' to aesthetics (Hassenzahl, 2008). In addition, surprise as an element of play has been pursued by design researchers in order to enhance the social and imaginative aspects of play. To achieve this aim, engaging different levels of the senses is very important for designers (Chapman, 2005, p.81, McDonagh, 2004; Norman, 2004).

For example, in *Effects of Visual-Auditory Incongruity on Product Expression and Surprise* (Ludden, Schifferstein, 2007) Geke D. S. Ludden and Hendrik N. J. Schifferstein from the *Department of Industrial Design, Delft University of Technology*, try to examine auditory effects in eliciting surprise. They designed the sounds of dust busters and juicers to fit the appearances and influence the expression of them. Evoking surprise was one of the results in their design practice.

Norman also emphasises the role of pleasant tones and the playful usage of sounds. He suggests using 'pleasant tones instead of irritating beeps' (Norman, 2004, pp.120, 121) in products, as implemented in the examples of the new tone applications in mobile phones, the whistle kettle by Richard Sapper for Alessi or Segway, a two-wheeled vehicle with a gearbox which produces music instead of noise (Norman, 2004, pp.120, 121).

If one considers the kitchen, it has always been a noisy space thanks to an orchestra of rhythms and noises relating to chopping, grinding, grating, stirring, boiling and frying. In more recent years, these mechanical sounds have been joined by the 'designed sound' of blenders, electrical whisks, tin openers and so forth, along with the application of music in some kettle, refrigerator and cooker designs. Although this demonstrates that products for the kitchen are often perceived through sensual engagement, senses alone are not enough to give meaning to something (Chapman, 2005, p. 165).

Playful possibilities and creating one's own story and ritual

In AoI, there is a story for every product and every individual user has personal rituals they enact when interacting with products. Hummels begins her story with her own toaster and demonstrates how this ordinary artefact enriched her experience with use every morning. The memory it carries and the trust it has gained over the years had led Hummels to develop a story and a daily conversation with the object (Hummel, 2000, p.1.20).

She notes her 'toaster is almost saying: come, hand me your bread. I will take care of it and produce the most delicious toast, especially for you' (Hummel, 2000, p.1.20). As a result, she treats the toaster as a live, animated object. The toaster, in the hand of Hummels, becomes a toy, and Hummels, in front of the toaster, becomes a person with a vivid imagination akin to a child. Hummels' story of the toaster demonstrates how an object can simply embrace playful characteristics and become a medium of distraction and entertainment.

In the following discussion, I argue how the notion of narratives or personal stories is desirable and essential for playful interactions, and play can provide desirable ‘diversity’ (Hummel, 2000, p.1.21) for individuals to enjoy the beauty of interaction.

Similar to Hummels’ experience with the toaster, Norman has a story about his teapot collections. He believes, depending on his mood, the occasion and the context influences his use of one of the teapots but among them, he likes *The Tilting Teapot* for its cleverness and its ‘fascinating mixture of the functional and charming’ (Norman, 2004, p.4). This teapot goes into three different positions depending on the different stages of the preparation of the tea: 1) pouring water onto the tea leaves 2) leaving to brew 3) once brewed and ready to serve. He adds, ‘I love to show people how the tilting teapot works, explaining how the position of the pot signals the state of the tea’ (Norman, 2004) (see Figure 2-17). In these statements, Norman engages his audiences with a narrative of fun and entertainment. He admits that it may not be the proper way of doing things, but attests that ‘it is about fun, delight and the pleasure of the experience’. However, the significance of such a ‘delightful’ situation ‘depends a lot upon the context’ (Norman, 2004, pp.100-104).



Figure 2-17: Tilting tea pot

Norman’s statements encapsulate his personality as much as they do the embedded quality of the product, and at the same time, the audience or spectator’s role in this narrative, who could agree or disagree with the proposed fun, play and delight. Yet, given he has described it is a product, which, based on agreed roles and the sequence of action, it still engages the users.

I use the term ‘narrative’ for his experience, because it is one of the possible meanings that one can take from this product; many are possible, maybe as many as the number of different users, other meanings and stories for this artefact. According to Krippendorff and Butter, ‘the meanings of an artefact are the narratives in which that artefact can occur, conceivable and realistic to a community of stakeholders¹’ (Krippendorff; Butter, 2008, p.369). In brief, one can say that narrative is about ‘how’ a story is presented while story itself talks about ‘what’, and includes events and existences such as happenings and characters (Chatman, 1978, p.18). In other words, if the story of the ‘tilt pot’ is pouring tea, how Norman is describing and using it will be one among many of its narratives.

Whilst Krippendorff connects narratives to the meanings, Hummels defends diversity and different stories of usage for individuals and argues that ‘open systems which do not impose a predefined way of interacting ... are able to adapt to the situation and evolve during interaction with a specific user.’ (Hummel, 2000, p.1.20). I want to question whether the open system or open-ended products are the playful ones.

The answer can be found in the challenge Gaver and his colleagues experienced when designing and developing *The Drift Table* and convinced them to come up with three assumptions in relation to ‘ludic design’ (Gaver et al., 2004). Ludic design, for them, should have these three characteristics:

- 1) Promote curiosity, exploration and reflection. Gaver and his colleagues explain it is fundamental to ludic designs that people have a chance to explore designed objects and provide their own meaning of things. Therefore, to follow such aims, designers should avoid assigning defined tasks for their designs. (Gaver et al., 2004)
- 2) De-emphasise the pursuit of external goals. For these researchers, ludic activities are non-utilitarian. ‘If a system can easily be used to achieve practical tasks, this will distract from the possibilities it offers for more playful engagement’ (Gaver et al., 2004).

¹ Klaus Krippendorff in *Semantic Turn*, suggests this word as a broader term for those who benefit from a product, from users to designers.

- 3) 'Maintain openness and ambiguity. If people are to find their own meaning for activities, or to pursue them without worrying about their meaning, designs should avoid clear narratives of use. Instead they should be open-ended or ambiguous in terms of their cultural interpretation and the meanings - including personal and ethical ones - people ascribe to them' (Gaver et al., 2004).

As they note, the development of *The Drift Table* took them on a philosophical journey of ideas to enable them in 'supporting ludic values in the form of an actual artefact' (Gaver et al., 2004).

Following such research, the Korean designers, Tek-Jin Nam and Changwon Kim conducted a survey on the ludic values of products. They proposed three key features that could be pursued to support playful engagements: the creation of narratives about imaginary creatures; embedded serendipitous functions; and physical interaction. They concluded 'that everyday products can be recreated and used as a mediator which supports ludic activities' and this method enables designers to 'understand new interaction and functional opportunities in the design of interactive everyday products' (Nam and Kim, 2011).

Their research demonstrates that playful interaction shares many features with AoI. Both debates emphasise the importance of physical and functional interactions, and give credit to the role of individual narratives in giving meanings to functions. However, contrary to Gaver's argument, they do not consider that ludic values are necessarily separable from utilitarian functions and usability. This contradiction, which challenges functionality in terms of playability, is followed in this research through the fieldwork.

Moreover, the other aspects of AoI which involve the individual's perception, cognition and subjectivity can contribute to the playability of a product and the role of the user. When Hummels and others discuss the context of use, sensory engagements and the narratives in interaction with products, they assign a major role to the user and subjective matters which, in a playful mode of interaction, I translate into playability. Accordingly, by separating utilitarian functions from ludic functions, the inclusive meaning of play, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, will be

ignored and again, the traditional distinction of serious and playful matters will be reinforced, while this research tries to emphasise the inseparable quality of play from real life and its serious functions.

2.4 Taxonomy of playfulness in product design

Based on the definitions of play and reviewing products through AoI, I have developed a taxonomy of playfulness in products (Table 2-2). In my taxonomy, I have categorised playful quality according to the two basic objective parameters of form and function. In other words, every object is posited with regard to its playful form or function parameters. Playfulness, in terms of functionality, refers on the one hand, to creativeness and the open-ended quality of a product and on the other hand, to its rigid functionality. The form of products, similarly, is assessed on the spectrum of its unconventional to its conventional qualities.

- 1) Visually playful, such as Alessi's toy-shaped small kitchen wares.
- 2) Functionally unconventional and surprising; sensory engaging and attractive, such as Droog products.
- 3) Transcendence made to challenge and criticise functionality, routines and behaviours, such as experimental designs at the Royal College of Art and Goldsmiths, University of London.
- 4) Ordinary and conventional but can afford playfulness which can include any products.

Taxonomy of Playful Products



Table 2-2: Taxonomy of playful products

Visually playful

The first category consists of a strand of mass-produced artefacts with visually seductive and attractive characteristics; products by Alessi or [Magis](#) (the Italian design company established in 1976 that is famous for its plastic production) have this quality. They have a distinct/concrete quality of visual engagement and as mentioned before, some people associate them with being playful. Nevertheless, the attribute of playfulness should be examined. They are definitely advocating a sort of play from the designers' side, according to the definition of play by Salen and Zimmerman (see page 36). The visual manipulation or design of unconventional forms, without altering the function of a product, is the safest mode to integrate playful properties into a product. Hence, playing with the appearance - with the elements of design, such as colours, texture, form or changing the design's visual structures, such as scale, rhythm or emphasis - in any way, is a designed trick dictated by the designer.

The visual engagement can sometimes be considered playful because it mimics or reminds the viewer of children's toys or animated characters in films. In so doing, this degree of visual stimulus envelops a product at first glance, delays the process of cognition and affects its meaning. Hence, it may engage the user in a sort of playful journey to guess its function. Additionally, products which are toy-like, remind the viewer of childhood fantasies (see Winnicott and Fornari's account of objects on page 16). They play with people's memories, provoke their imagination and narrate different stories. The experience of use becomes so pleasant that one can have a strong feeling of attachment. This kind of design, with a focus on vision, is followed by the Italian design avant-gardes movements such as Alchimia and Memphis, as was discussed in the introduction (page 16) and has then penetrated to mass production.

In the OTT hooks example, Figure 2-18, by a slight exaggeration to the length of the door hooks, the designer mocks a serious thing, challenges it and adds some fantasy to it.



Figure 2-18: OTT hooks for Viable. The exaggeration in size of the hooks is visually attractive and playful, the winner of the Elle Decoration British Design Award for Best Accessory (2007)



Figure 2-19: Sugar Castor by Gino Zucchini for Alessi



Figure 2-20: Nut Cracker by Giovannoni for Alessi

Researchers have examined the importance of appearance and visual attributes: Mariëlle Creusen and Dirk Snelders, Professors of Marketing at the School of Industrial Design Engineering, Delft University of Technology, tested the

relationship between product appearance and consumer pleasure. In their research, the pleasure that consumers gain from the appearance of a product had great weight. They also found that people even judge some of the utilitarian functions according to the form of the products (Crilly, Moultrie, & Clarkson, 2004; Bloch, 1995, quoted in Chang & Wu, 2007). In a similar vein, in the aforementioned research by Chang and Wu (see page 62), the pleasure elicited from the form of products has been tested and categorised. Again, the importance of visual engagement was very significant (Chang & Wu, 2007) and the playful attribute was recognised and assigned to, namely, 'cultural pleasure'. In this research, the functional aspect of products was not considered, while the pleasure and satisfaction to be gained from the function and process of using and utilizing things are considered highly by designers. For example, an unconventional or irregular way of doing things, taking Norman's tilting teapot (Figure 2-17 on page 80) as an example, can bring memorable moments to one's experience and last throughout life. The satisfaction and pleasure derived from this practice can be other aspects of playful products (I will discuss this in detail in the next category).



Figure 2-21: Tam Tam Sgabello (2002) is a low stool rotational-moulded polyethylene design, suitable for outdoor use, designed by Matteo Thun for Magis.

Other manufacturers, such as Authentics, Flos, and Serafino Zani, like Magis, aim to achieve a level of frivolity by employing famous and talented designers. Konstantin Grcic (1965-), the German designer who has worked with all the above companies, has the attitude of 'defining function in human terms', and has developed a design language that combines formal rigour with subtle humour in his design products and furniture (Design-Museum, 2007).



Figure 2-22: Metal spatula designed by Konstantin Grcic

As items in this category can be found on the high street and in online shops, I anticipate people will have their own ideas about them, making it crucial to test what people think about these products and how as users they approach them. Thus, in my interviews and observations, I examine people's opinions and their views of this category.

Playful functions while sensory engaging

The second category with a quality of playfulness is concerned with embedding playful functions. Products in this category evoke pleasure through their physical interactions and encourage playful behaviour. Again, some of the Alessi products, Droog, and [Viable](#), the London-based design studio that is famous for its creative diversity and ingenuity, among others, have such a quality and provide good examples. The Alessi *Mangiauvo* egg cup/holder (Figure 1-3, page 9), beyond its funny, engaging look, suggests a new, convenient function. Likewise, the magnets in the *Lilliput* salt and pepper set (Figure 2-23) give it a variety of positions which offers opportunities to engage in play.



Figure 2-23: Lilliput salt and pepper set from the Family Follows Fiction collection by Stefano Giovannoni for Alessi (1993)

Magis, in 2002, ran a project by Michael Young (1966-), the British product designer, to design outdoor furniture ‘with a smile on its face’. Young designed the cartoonish Yogi Sofa, a chair and table which, at first glance, looks like children’s furniture; in terms of functionality, these pieces were smaller than normal adult size. Young explains that ‘Yogi places you in a vaguely humorous predicament and forces you to relax,’ and adds, ‘you can’t take yourself too seriously’ (Young, 2006).



Figure 2-24: Yogi sofa and chair for Magis by Michael Young (2002)

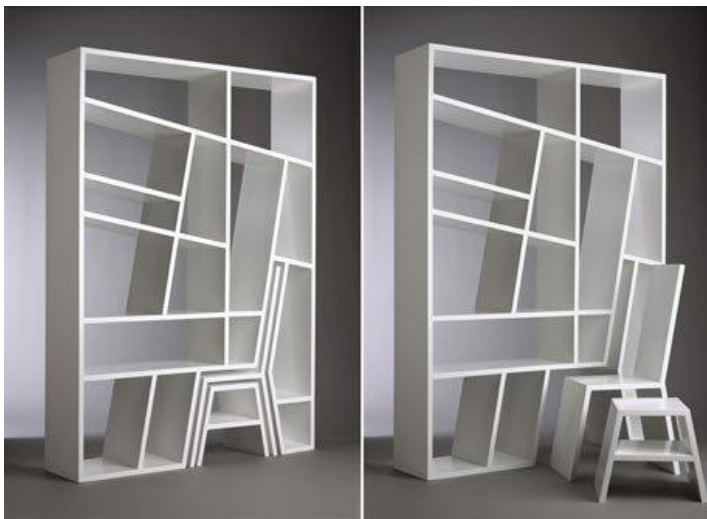


Figure 2-25: From the Shelflife series by Charles Trevelyan for Viable that challenges conventional forms and functions in a playful way.

In the pursuit of challenging product design in terms of its functionality, in 2009, Droog announced its intention for an exhibition in New York as ‘hidden clutter, hidden meaning, hidden function, and hidden value’ (Droog, 2009). The ‘hidden’ quality that Droog’s designers sought to achieve is the element which I believe gives a playful quality to their designs.

The Sugar Cage (Figure 2-26), a container for sugar cubes by Sofie Lachaert and Luc d'Hanis, for example, embodies different connotations which play with the meaning and form of a sugar bowl (Droog, 2009). At the first glance, it draws attention to the ontology of the product while humorously challenging the utilitarian function of the sugar pot. Instead of it being like the more traditional sugar bowl, it takes an unconventional form, thus asking the viewer/user to ask many questions given its suggested ambiguity and vagueness. It is also a reference to Marcel Duchamp's *Why Not Sneeze Rose Sélavy?* In the Droog website, the statement that accompanies this artefact remarks: 'Duchamp raised consumer items to pieces of art. Lachaert and d'Hanis respond by bringing the piece back for use' (Droog, 2009). In this way, Droog acquires further kudos for this artefact by linking it to Duchamp and his exclusive audience.



Figure 2-26: Sugar Cage



Figure 2-27: Marcel Duchamp's 'Why Not Sneeze Rose Sélavy?' (1921)

Nevertheless, the meaning and many connotations it conveys provides different ways of perceiving this product. By imprisoning a desirable commodity (sugar cubes), the meaning of the object goes beyond the conventional concept of any sugar bowl and

questions its ontology and utility. Why have the sugar cubes been caged? Because they are dangerous? Or has somebody, given his/her own sense of fun, imprisoned them? Isn't it a good idea to jail sugar/keep it out of reach? What about other things or how about putting people and other creatures in jail? One might argue there is a darker side to it and its reference to the political injustices of Dutch colonialism, sugar plantations and slavery. In this way, layers of interpretation enter into artistic, cultural, hygienic and political domains. Discovering the hidden meaning and function of the object could give pleasure to the user of such products. The ambiguity or vagueness in defining and understanding an object and using it is another characteristic for describing such playfulness.

Another example is *The Dish Mop* designed by Gijs Bakker, which is a 'dish-washing brush made out of a brightly coloured foam ball held between the arms of a steel fork, which doesn't need to be thrown away after a few uses' (Droog, 2009). Its spare sponges, suggests the Droog website humorously, can be used for juggling (Droog, 2009).



Figure 2-28: The Dish Mop designed by Gijs Bakker for Droog Design (2004)

Besides, Droog designs clearly challenge aspects of functionality and question the conventional way of doing things whilst simultaneously incorporating playful elements. For me, *The Chest of Drawers* by Tejo Remy (Figure 2-29) is an iconic piece in this respect. This artefact is made of a variety of small individual drawers which are clumsily bound together. The way they are put together is visually funny

and ironically, it challenges the essential nature of a drawer as an appliance for providing order and shelving/classification.



Figure 2-29: The Chest of Drawers by Tejo Remy (1991)



Figure 2-30: Double Chair, designed by Richard Hutten's for Magis

Richard Hutten is another designer who cooperates with Droog and challenges the function of products. In an interview with designboom in 2007, he explained how he started off with a very conceptual approach which led to objects that were not very functional and now function has become more important to him (Designboom, 2007b). He defines his later works, which are functional, everyday objects as friendly, surprising and humorous (Designboom, 2007b). Double Chair designed by him (Figure 2-30), similar to the dish mop, suggests play with minimal visual elements. However, it suggests a playful behaviour. It challenges all the other ways of sitting that one is accustomed to. Wherever these double chairs are put they

advocate a playful engagement by dismantling the old roles of sitting in public or private places.

This minimalism in pursuing playfulness is just the opposite of some of the visually discrete quality of play in the products categorised in the first part; the Alessi examples of the *Sugar Caster* (Figure 2-19) or the *Nut Cracker* (Figure 2-20). The difference between these two categories of playfulness, one a bit loud and bold and the other modest in look, clarifies different levels of sensory engagements in playful interaction. Nevertheless, it is sometimes just a normal spatula when one is frying and pretending to conduct music can be more playful.

In all the examples so far it is the role of the designer which predominates. I believe this playfulness is dictated by designers and nothing much is then left for the users to experience or initiate their own play. The playfulness in all those products obviously encourages play but at the same time, it lacks the element of being timeless. Doing things differently, of course, is an enjoyable experience but for how long? These products can build a sense of attachment but will not be able to maintain users' curiosity for long. The question then is how can a product have a more lasting playful quality? Is it some inbuilt play which makes things playable and re-playable or is it something with a more assigned role for the users? Designing users' behaviour is like designing a toy for a child with the suggestion or intention that it is meant to be played in a certain way. Even children improvise their own play with toys. What would these designed objects/systems suggest users should play with? How can users find a moment to play with the function of things? Is this category the only design-practice that contributes to advocating functionality versus playfulness? In the search for more open-ended products that inherit playfulness over time, it is relevant to quote from two proponents of abstractness in design. British-based designers Fiona Raby and Anthony Dunne initiated many student projects with the motto – 'design with a form so abstract as to be timeless'. In a debate about their book, *Design Noir*, they mentioned that 'today, large corporations know that as many of our basic needs are met, we desire to satisfy more abstract ones, but they are unsure what these might be' (Byvanck, 2001, p.52). Therefore, do Raby and Dunne know the answer? What do they mean by abstractness? Is there a link between this

abstractness and playfulness? Looking back to the examples in this category, some of the success in achieving playfulness is initiated by the ambiguity when perceiving the products and their unconventional usability. The hidden agenda in Droog design, for example, supports such abstractness, but is that the possibility that Dunne and Raby are talking about? By examining projects undertaken by Dunne and Raby, it is clear that they seek a different category for their products. Some of their work, in addition to some other experimental design projects, provides the third group of products that I wish to categorise in my taxonomy.

Transcendence: the challenge for functionality

It is with reference to Dunne and Raby's idea of abstractness and current trends in design laboratories and schools that the third group in this classification emerges. The promoters of such designs try to be critical of the current bias towards utility of product and advocate designs free from previous conventions. They are open-minded and welcome any narrative and interpretation. This category is allocated to experimental products with abstract and open-ended functions which, at the same time, could be interpreted as playfulness. Temporality and context of use are essential to understanding this category. Products such as the *History Table Cloth* (Figure 1-5), *Drift Table* (Figure 2-12), *Plane Tracker* (Figure 1-7) or the electronic artefacts developed for the Placebo project introduced by Dunne and Raby in *Design Noir*, tease the conventional rules of functionality and utility and question how products can be beneficial to people; they have no particular assigned usage and users, based on their needs and desires, employ them. However, they raise constant questions about the objects' meanings and existence as well as who we are and how we like to be, or should be in regard to 'others' and for these reasons, I name this category 'transcendence' as it goes beyond the usual limit of things.

These products are defined differently by various designers. They are called ambiguous, useless (Law, 2007), open-ended (Gaver, in press), personal, entertaining, critical (Dunne and Raby, 2001), interpretative and so on. Such critical points of view can be found in Gaver's statement about the advantages of openness in products. First, he believes, openness allows 'designers to highlight situations and raise issues without dictating their interpretation' and 'second, it allows the same

devices to be appreciated in multiple ways by multiple people, potentially extending their appeal' (Gaver et al., 2008). He believes that their experimental designs 'are not *for* anything' and 'not really complete until people use them and find their own meanings for them' (Gaver, in press; Gaver, 2002). He adds:

We tend to cling to the notion in our research and our designs, and mass marketing encourages this to appeal to large populations. But we need to resist these homogenising forces, embracing and encouraging individuality and choice through the technologies we produce. Most of all, we need to stop designing technology that tells us what to do and who to be. Assumptions that technology should be useful and usable - that it should be clear what you are meant to do with a system, and how to do it - need to be radically rethought.(Gaver, in press)

It is the criteria that can include playfulness. In his other publications, Gaver discusses the idea of design for *homo ludens* and the compatibility of technology and design in terms of playful intentions and responds to the key question: 'what sorts of computational device might appeal to *homo ludens*?' (Gaver, 2002). He merges the openness of a product with the playful nature of a human being that, as a result of new media and technology, has received a chance to be recognised. As such, the third category in this taxonomy gives credit to an alternative design that seeks to satisfy the experimental and playful characteristics of human nature. As Dunne and Raby mentioned, this category rejects the assumption of 'how things are now as being the only possibility, it provides a critique of the prevailing situation through design that embodies alternative social, cultural, technical or economic values' (Byvanck, 2001) and gives the users a significant role to experiment with and conceive of technology and new products.

Ordinary and conventional: affording play

A fourth category can be considered in relation to conventional products with neither playful form nor explicit playful function. This category of objects introduces the ordinary objects people normally use; which can be any tools or appliances. I believe playfulness can also be embedded in this kind of product under certain circumstances. It depends entirely on the users' state of mind and the temporal and

occasional situations. It is about the subjectivity of playfulness and in this case, I refer to Hummels' narrative about her toaster.

This category is about creativity and play in which users can instigate: a navigation through assigned utilitarian functions to a playful moment; and a 'paidia moment' when it lets the users improvise their own fun and play with a product. It is beyond any dictation or prejudgment. Again, this could be the example of the comb which helps us to hold a nail steady while driving it securely into the wall with a hammer.

My free adaptation of the theory of affordance, (see page 95) argues that any object can afford applications beyond its designated ones including playfulness; something unexpected and imaginative by users which immerse them in their own world of play and is physically engaging. Home appliances, computers, mobile phones, cars, furniture all have this quality and in some cases, their playful affordance is given much more attention than their utilitarian functions. A mobile phone, in De Lange's study of playful identities, is an example of such an affordance. I aim to focus particularly on this category in my fieldwork and examine the extent to which users can elicit playfulness from ordinary products and what its evidences are.

Additionally, there is another range of products which are designed purposefully for fun, play and leisure. They are designed and used according to the expected functions. Toys, game and sport appliances are all included in this group, however, since the focus of this research is on functional appliances and the design of everyday products, this category has not been researched.

2.5 Play in summary

In the study of play, a wide range of definitions and categorisations can be found. However, they have one thing in common: the ambiguity and complexity of play. One of the purposes of this literature review was to determine an appropriate and practical definition for play to be applied to product design. As a result, Salen and Zimmerman's definition of play appears to be the most appropriate one in this respect as it envisages play as being interweaved with ordinary life, and defines it in terms of functionality and the utilitarian values of objects and systems.

In reviewing the literature in the field of design, it becomes apparent that designers have embraced playfulness in products, and they are much more successful in practice rather than theorising about play in product design. The literature on emotional design, dealing with play, is mostly advocated by psychologists, design engineers and ergonomists but not product designers. Much focus on usability or criticising ease of use demonstrates that the intangible factors in design are difficult to theorise about as they are dealing with variable factors such as the dynamism of culture, individual needs, interests and perceptions.

The literature on the pleasure to be had from products was mainly focused on the visual and the appearance of products while theoretically, all our senses are able to anticipate and elicit enjoyment and pleasure. In reviewing AoI, in an effort to augment users' pleasure in interactions with products for the benefit of this research, it demonstrates a great potential to define playful interactions. Thus this research and its fieldwork have been set to develop the AoI engagement to a level that embraces playful interactions. AoI, which takes into account the individual's perception, cognition and subjectivity, can contribute to the playability of a product, as discussed earlier. When Hummels and others discuss the context of use, sensory engagements and the narratives in the interaction with products, they assign a major role to the user and it highlights subjective matters, which I have translated into playability in a playful interaction.

In my taxonomy of playful products, the degrees of playfulness in relation to the function and appearance of products was explored, however, the role of different users was not investigated; by this I mean there is a lack of material in subjective aspects and playability of such products. As such, this research aims to employ the appropriate methodology and to undertake subsequent fieldwork to shed light on the under-researched and relatively hidden playful interactions in products.

2.6 The kitchen through history

One of the aims of this research is to understand how the kitchen and its appliances can be playfully engaging and provide the users' pleasure and happiness, and how much the kitchen and its appliances can present the 'ludic-ness' of our time. By

reviewing the history of the kitchen in this part, I intend to provide first, an overview of the socio-cultural environment of the kitchen. Secondly, I demonstrate how technology, innovation and design have transformed this space to the extent that these transformations affect the meaning of the kitchen through time. The historical study of the kitchen in my research includes three different stages: the traditional kitchen, modern kitchen and postmodern kitchen.

- The traditional kitchen: a large all-purpose room includes kitchen practices such as food preparation, boiling water, cooking and serving food. The kitchen was a non-autonomous space.
- The modern kitchen: An autonomous place with specific function and utilisation for domestic chores influenced by technological developments.
- The postmodern kitchen: An open or semi-open platform to use far beyond its utilitarian functions, including leisure, fun and play.

In reviewing the history of housing development, it is clear that for centuries the majority of people in Europe, including Britain, as well as America, did not have the fitted kitchen of today or even the kitchen as a separate room. It was just for the wealthier people in society that a specific place was allocated for the practice of cooking and food preparation. For most people before the 19th century, food was cooked on the hearth located in the centre of the house, which also served as the main source of heat for the house (Snodgrass, 2004). The food was prepared and served in the same place as all the other household activities, even bathing. The kitchen was no more than a ‘large all-purpose room, equipped with fixtures’ (Poletti, 1994, p.44) and was linked with other essential activities in the house, such as dining, working, sitting, child caring and socialising. One can argue that cooking, eating and feeding were essential and the allocated place for this purpose was as important and as necessary as other aspects of living.

However, the idea of the kitchen as a separate room goes back to the 16th century. During the Renaissance, the Italian architect Andrea Palladio (1508-80), saw the kitchen as an unpleasant place due to the heat from fires, smoke, strong smells and loud noises. In his designs, he was the first to suggest a remote place for the kitchen (Mielke, 2004) but still, the implementation of that idea was affordable only to wealthier people.

In the 19th century, a fundamental change happened in the domestic environment to alter this. The changes in the kitchen run parallel with the Industrial Revolution, the emerging new social classes, and the growing of the middle class and town dwellers (Ferguson, 1971), and the associated rapid scientific and technological developments. These changes gradually transformed the appearance of cities, houses and people's lifestyles. For instance, fireplaces became movable with developments in cast-iron techniques and the replacement of solid fuel such as wood and coal with gas and electricity (Mielke, 2004), and led to new cookers emerging from this technology.¹ New gas stoves gradually made their way into many households by the 1920s with light enamelled iron-sheet designs (De Haan, 1977). The application of such clean fuels for domestic use is believed to have been the most influential phase in the transformation of the 20th-century kitchen (Kinchin and O'connor, 2011).

As a result, for most middle-class homes, the kitchen became a private and closed space where modern identity could be expressed. Ease and hygiene became the concerns of architects and domestic reformers. The multi-purpose spaces of previous kitchens disappeared, and were transformed into 'single-function areas, the fundamental one being the area designed specifically for the preparation, cooking and the storage of food - the kitchen' (Poletti, 1994, p.44) in control of women, or in some cases, with the help of servants (Poletti, 1994, p.44).

Mass production, particularly of household appliances, caused the kitchen to change rapidly in the first half of the 20th century on a scale that had not been observed in the previous three hundred years (Jean-Claude, 2010). More gadgets and appliances for the convenience of housekeepers were developed and a modern functionalist attitude spread throughout Western society. For example, step-saving food preparation by Christine McGaffey Frederick, the American leading figure in the science of home economics, who suggested compact work spaces, easy washable surfaces, the continuous counter top and standardisation (Snodgrass, 2004).

¹ The first gas stove was invented in England in 1826 by James Sharp and was on sale in 1850 and exhibited in the Crystal Palace, London, in 1851, Sharpe's stove was commercialised in the 1880s.

These efforts eventually led to the emergence of new kitchens, such as the iconic *Frankfurt Kitchen* developed by Margarete Schutte-Lihotzky in 1926-27 in Frankfurt. *The Frankfurt Kitchen* emerged as a result of social changes, the intervention of the state and a successful collaboration of product design and architecture professions to bring together ‘a pragmatic application of new material and technologies’ (Kinchin and O’connor, 2011) called the ‘modern kitchen’ (Kinchin and O’connor, 2011; Poletti, 1994).



Figure 2-31: The Frankfurt Kitchen by Margarete Schutte-Lihotzky in 1926-27

In 1932, Karel Teige, the modern architecture critic, in praising the modern kitchen, argued that it ‘has become a model workshop, a chemical laboratory ... it is the best designed and most rationalised room of the modern house (Kinchin and O’connor, 2011). Similarly, according to Robert Mallet-Stevens’ journal in 1931, ‘the modern kitchen, a real kitchen, should not feature any decoration or ornament; it should be attractive because of its appropriateness and brightness, and the logic which governs the arrangement of the various working implements. The modern kitchen should be white, immaculate, washable, and easy to clean.’ (Poletti, 1994, p.49) This rationality and functionality represent the modern kitchen of the 1930s when the kitchen was recognised as an autonomous place, operating at a designated time and with its own rituals. The modern kitchen was thought of as a machine, a meal machine which, by design, optimises time and energy and encourages independence, convenience and cleanliness.

After the 1930s, all the endeavours in product design, architecture and engineering aimed to make the kitchen more independent and convenient, mainly by following the ‘electrification of the kitchen’ (Kinchin and O’connor, 2011). During the 1950s post-war era, kitchens were designed with the concept of ‘automation, integration and customisation’ (Hand and Shove, 2004) in mind which was intended to make the housewife enjoy her freedom and control over the tasks. The changes that happened during the 1950s played a significant role in women’s emancipation from domestic chores, and the way society linked them to domestic work (Jean-Claude, 2010).

The 1950s also witnessed many new ideas regarding kitchen gadgets and appliances, but one which playfully engaged the user of products was Tupperware parties. In 1947, Earl Tupper, a chemist at DuPont, invented a range of polyethylene food containers with an air- and watertight seal, which became a powerful symbol of American suburban domestic life in the 1950s (Kinchin and O’connor, 2011). The Tupper food storage containers were marketed successfully, mainly due to the home parties women held for the purpose of selling these containers (Alexander, 2004, p.95), but these events also provided opportunities for social interaction and play for the participants. For instance, in one of the company party booklets, a game was designed for the participants to make a sculpture out of a chewed gum and competition winners were given a prize (Alexander, 2004, p.95).

The kitchen of the next few years was given different names, ‘Atomic Kitchen’, ‘Miracle Kitchen’(Alexander, 2004), and the ‘American kitchen’ (Alexander, 2004; Oldenziel and Zachmann, 2009). Nevertheless, they followed similar ideas and were marketed as ‘labour saving’ and ‘liberating women’ (Reid, 2009). Among them, the American kitchen defined a dream kitchen for many women all over the world, and caught the attention following the ‘kitchen debate’ in 1959 (Oldenziel and Zachmann, 2009; Alexander, 2004). However, the American kitchen symbolised liberalism as much as capitalism and consumption.

The kitchen during the Second World War and in the post-war period was approached in a different way in Britain. After that war, new housing projects with prefabricated kitchens were manufactured for assembly on site. The aim was to

create temporary bungalows to accommodate people who had lost their houses during the wartime bombing of Britain. These projects were mainly contracted to the aircraft industry and military technologies which needed to transform into peacetime operations (Holder, 2009). The result, as assessed by the dwellers, was successful and satisfying, and housing developments mostly addressed the needs of urban rather than rural families. Generally, housewives found their daily domestic chores were easier, quicker and less tiring than in their previous houses and this ‘gave them more leisure time’ (Holder, 2009) than ever before.

The idea of the kitchen as an optimised time-saving meal machine continued through the following decades in the 1960s and 1970s, although, in some designs, aesthetics and style were considered more than before. The ‘Technovision’ kitchen by Hasso Gehrman, designed in 1970 for Elektra in Austria, was a prototype of a fully automatic kitchen called the ‘perfect helper’ (Mielke, 2004) for housewives. Although it had never the chance to be manufactured into mass production, its concept fascinated both ‘technology-loving male [...] and] practically minded housewives’ (Mielke, 2004).

At the Cologne Furniture Fair in 1970, Luigi Coloni, a German organic designer, together with Poggenpohl and the Institute for Environmental Physiology, exhibited a sphere-shaped kitchen similar in form to a cave. This kitchen was inspired by the natural primitive living space of the human, combining the prehistoric mode of living in caves with science fiction (Mielke, 2004). This experimental design illustrates the kitchen as a spaceship, fully automated and in control of the housewife.

Gradually, these pragmatic concerns and this laboratory-based way of looking at the kitchen were questioned. Was the kitchen a woman’s private space to produce meals before they are presented to the dining table or was it the heart of the home where the whole family could come together for different purposes? These questions raise the issue of lifestyles, social class, and other cultural differences that, in the design and function of the kitchen, should be considered.

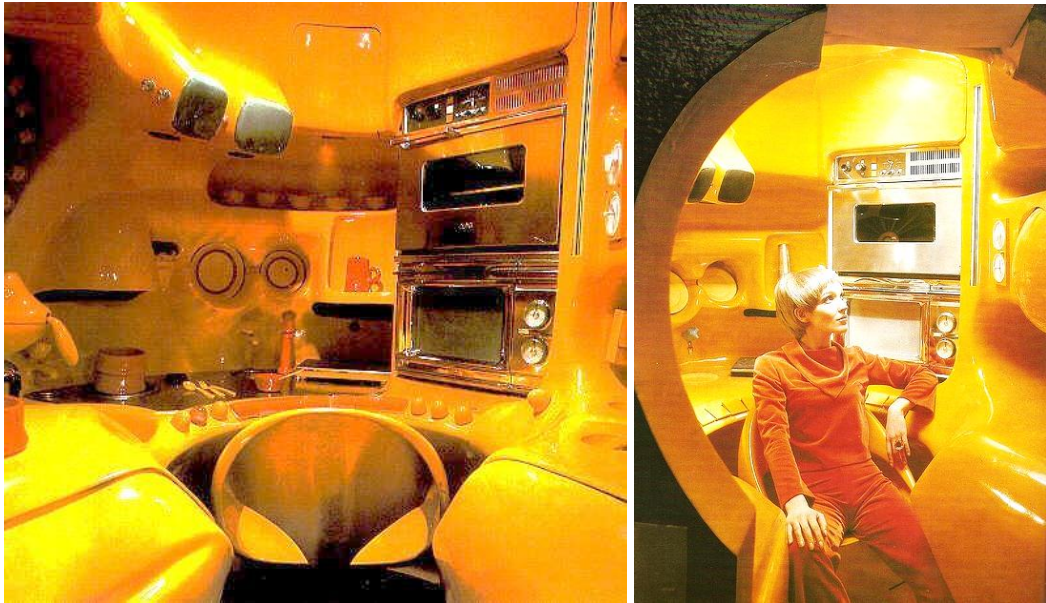


Figure 2-32: Sphere-shaped experimental kitchen, designed with a chair in the centre by Luigi Coloni, exhibited in 1970.

As the debates on modernist values grew in the 1960s, the need for change was followed by society, thanks to changing social roles and movements such as feminism and the counterculture of hippies and environmentalism. A decade later, research in cultural studies, established as an academic field in the 1970s, criticised aspects of consumerism and capitalism. The outcome of such criticisms highlighted the need for change from a homogenised and standard pragmatic design approach which focuses merely on optimisation and technological developments, to one with room for more human factors, cultural and individual preferences. This shift from a functional emphasis to a more individual one in the kitchen was the focus of a study in 2004. In *Orchestrating Concepts: Kitchen Dynamics and Regime Change in Good Housekeeping and Ideal Home, 1922- 2002*, Martin Hand and Elizabeth Shove based their research on an archive study and review of two magazines, *Good Housekeeping* and *Ideal Home*, and illustrated three different categories to describe the kitchen transformation in three snapshots of 1922, 1952 and 2002. (Hand and Shove, 2004)

	Material arrangements and technologies	Meanings and images	Skills competences, and forms of know-how
1922	Isolated appliances	Efficiency and time saving, back region work place	Judgments of quality, culinary skills, and domestic management servants' skills
1952	Coordinated system, sets of appliances, new materials, and colour schemes	Modernity streamlined place to live and integral part of the home	Delegation (to machines), time management, coordination of the whole ensemble
2002	Surfaces and appearances are important but appliances are invisible	Customized expression of style place to live an integral part of your home	Image managements and design lifestyle to the fore

Table 2-3: Constitutive elements of kitchen regimes represented in 1922, 1952 and 2002 in *Good Housekeeping* and *Ideal Home*. (Hand and Shove, 2004)

Hand and Shove demonstrate that from 1952 to 2002, the focus of images in these magazines changed from machines and appliances to people and family members (Hand and Shove, 2004). They note:

There are, however, some themes common to the kitchens of 2002 whether styled as 'traditional farmhouse', 'ultra-modern,' or 'American'. One has to do with their status within the home. As we have seen, the kitchens depicted in 1952 editions of *Good Housekeeping* and *Ideal Home* are empty of people but full of machines. By 2002 the kitchen has been repopulated and redefined as a space for living and leisure. The headline of one advertisement declares that: The kitchen is the focal point of the family home, so you need hassle-free elegance. Get the perfect kitchen for your lifestyle. (Good Housekeeping January 2002, p. 80 quoted in (Hand and Shove, 2004)

The kitchen of the 21st century is being formed as the 'centre' or the 'heart' of domestic life (Mielke, 2004) as well as other home activities. The manifestation of this claim is a greater emphasis on the dining kitchen, lounge-kitchen, or living kitchen. Although the first open-plan layout for the kitchen was presented decades

ago, it took more than five decades to become the norm for the majority of people. For example, in Frank Lloyd Wright's designs for the Willey House (1934) and the Jacobs House (1936), the kitchen was designed in an open plan, but it was not until the early 1950s that the open-plan kitchen was reviewed in *House and Home Magazine* (Bishop, 2009). In recent architectural plans, kitchen-living rooms are very popular. Open or semi-open plan designs create a 'fluid transition between the cooking, eating and living areas' (Mielke, 2004) and are seen as a return to the one-room kitchen of past times (Mielke, 2004). This transformation leads to a liberation of the kitchen from all its previous restraints and makes it an informal place, offering the potential for personal and stylish choices to be made.

As 'the distinction between the kitchen and the dining room' (Poletti, 1994, p.51) disappeared, women's feelings 'of separateness and exclusion from the social life of the family' (Poletti, 1994, p.51) also abated. The old dream of women, such as Catherine Beecher, the leading character of the American women's movement in the 19th century and the author of the revolutionary *Treatise on Domestic Economy* in 1842, eventually came true. In her book, she tried to find the honourable role of the housewife by suggesting the kitchen be placed at the centre of the home. She believed, 'it is impossible for a woman who cooks, washes and sweeps, to appear in the dress, or acquire the habits and manners of a lady. ... a housewife could do everything she needed, while keeping an eye on her children and her other housework' (Steel, 2011).

The dining kitchen was favoured by the British after the Second World War (Holder, 2009). In post-war research about housing and construction in Britain, it was found that 'even where an architect had deliberately left no room for eating in the kitchen, people managed to force a table and chairs into it in order to eat some of their meals there' (Alderson, 1962, p.26 quoted in Attfield, 2006).

Gradually the galley/laboratory format of the kitchen evolved to be part of the furniture with an open layout, and the stylish kitchen appliances appeared on the worktops (Poletti, 1994, p.52), which before tended to be hidden in the cupboards or the closed kitchens. In this way, I believe that the house, appliances and furniture,

which signify the status, taste and social class of the house owner, changed from only being selectively revealed to guests to becoming a more public space with the removal of the kitchen wall. As a result, the kitchen and its appliances more than ever before are representing the ‘homeowners’ and their identity.

In addition, recent architectural trends for having open plan or semi-open plan kitchens could be considered a return to the one-room kitchen of olden times (Mielke, 2004), before the 19th century. In these kitchens, the cooking, eating and living areas merge into each other, encouraging social interaction and challenging the private and social space divisions of the home. Yet, the layout and functions need to be compatible with the user’s needs, interests and desires. The spread of the lounge-kitchen or living kitchen is presenting a transformation of lifestyles. As a result, the kitchen for some groups of British society has become once more the centre of the household. The kitchen has been transformed into a more personal environment with personal choice of decoration and colours on the appliances and properties, while the conformity and uniformity followed in the 1950s and 1960s has gradually disappeared.

A transition from a utilitarian, often unpleasant environment into the luxury entertaining places of today has taken place if not tangibly then certainly psychologically through changes in our aims and aspirations. The kitchen is the most evolved place through the history of housing and has been greatly affected by innovations in technology. ‘The kitchen mirrors more effectively than any other room in the house the great social changes that have taken place in the last hundred years’ (Shove, 2007). All in all, with such background for the kitchen, I am curious to know how the so-called ludic culture of the time can be manifested in British kitchens and to what extent the playful character of kitchen practices depends on the users’ attitude or the quality of the appliances they use.

3 Methodology

In this chapter, I set out the methodological approach employed and developed for studying the playful engagement of users in the kitchen and with the kitchen appliances they use. The chapter begins by introducing ethnography as an appropriate methodology for this research. In addition, I discuss the key principles for conducting an ethnographic study of users and the other methods I have used. I refer to the qualitative research methods in social and human sciences, particularly multidisciplinary approaches to ethnography being used in cultural studies, design anthropology, and user-centred design.

I present a detailed description of my fieldwork and the analytic methods I used, including video and sensory ethnography, ethnographic interviews and observations, product analysis, photography, and focus group discussions. In addition, I discuss the methodological and ethical issues and challenges I faced in studying the users' practices and the modes of involvement I conducted within a playful context.

3.1 Ethnography, the methodology of studying users' playful interactions with products

The issue of play in this research is studied through the lens of the AoI in product design. AoI is used as an initial framework and it works as a pattern to explain how playful interactions can be aesthetically engaging, although one of the aims of this research is to demonstrate that this framework is not efficient in understanding different aspects of playfulness in products. Proposing AoI as a conceptual framework also suggests more qualitative research because its elements acknowledge that the individual's preferences, desires, skills and needs require a sensory engaging experience and give credit to the context of his/her use and personal rituals and stories (Hummels, 2000, p.1.18). These are qualities that need more flexible research approaches appropriated by qualitative research and ethnographic methods.

The following questions are a series of exploratory questions I intend to answer through the fieldwork.

- What do people think about playful products and appliances? What is their first impression of the topic of play in the kitchen?

- How do young women interact with kitchen appliances; what are their intentions, needs and desires?
- Are younger generations more playful than their parents? Are there any differences in the attitudes and behaviours of young women and the older generation? Are there any differences between the generation familiar with new technologies and the older generation, in terms of conceptualising play in the environment of the kitchen?
- How can the existing theories such as the ‘aesthetics of interaction’ be useful in describing the playful aspects of products and design practices?

These enquiries make the nature of this research more ‘exploratory, descriptive and interpretative’ (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). The exploratory quality of this research is intended to ‘provide a deeper understanding of’ (Silverman, 2002) the issue of play. Exploratory research in the beginning cannot be easily articulated and theorised. In such research, concepts and ideas in the discipline are tackled which are new and previous studies and information are not sufficient to explain them (Phillips and Pugh, 2007). I intend to investigate the individual’s account of how they experience playfulness, which makes the research more descriptive and interpretive. Previous research on the topic of playful design and its cultural aspects do not provide any theories or hypotheses to establish deductive or ‘explanatory research,’ (Marshall, Rossman, 2006, p.34) and the need for first-hand primary information is essential.

As noted in the introduction, my main objective is to understand how play can become an essential part of a product; by questioning the users’ role in kitchen scenarios, I hope to have a better understanding as to how playful artefacts can contribute to cultural transformation. Thus, here the problem is lack of understanding and the need for a framework to explain events and behaviours rather than finding a problem in the real world with a particular solution (Phillips and Pugh, 2007, pp. 51, 52).

In expanding AoI to a playful level, users’ interactions need to be ‘fully observed in their natural environment’, (Banks, 2007; Marshall and Rossman, 2006) hence ethnography as the methodology of research in this study is employed. However, complementary methods

with different techniques such as qualitative research methods such as video and sensory ethnography, ethnographic interviews and observation, focus group discussions and product analysis (Silverman, 2002) are developed to ‘serve the aims of the research’ (Pink, 2007, p.5) and tackle other relevant areas raised by the research questions. The research methods I employed help to understand different aspects of domestic practices in the kitchen and in a natural environment, they articulate a new framework to explain its playful aspects. Last but not least, I hope the outcome will lead the research into new territory and stimulate new thinking and design ideas in the future.

3.2 Ethnography of the users

Researchers in product design have used ethnography in their projects progressively through the last three decades. User-centred design, with the aim of engaging design with social sciences, was one of the first subjects to benefit from ethnography in both the discipline of product design and ergonomics (Green and Jordan, 2002; Krippendorff, 2006).

Ethnography has moved from being a methodology primarily used by anthropologists, to a useful tool for a wide range of disciplines and has changed in recent years in the scale and breadth of its application. Multidisciplinary approaches to the social sciences and humanities have also had an important role to play in these shifts (Gray, 2003). Ethnography has broadened out, with new approaches such as visual ethnography (Pink, 2007), sensory ethnography (Pink, 2009), corporate ethnography (Suri and Howard, 2006) and ‘a day in life’ (Riojas, 2011).

My approach to ethnography has benefited enormously from these new approaches. Whilst I need to understand the ‘depth (rather than coverage or frequency)’ (Taylor et al., 2002), of the everyday kitchen activities that often can be difficult to articulate (Green, Jordan, 2002, Taylor et al., 2002, p.176), I have taken an ‘eclectic’ (Gray, 2003, p.5) approach to ethnography in order to explore the research enquiries and provide a compatible, dynamic and flexible approach. One of the essential characteristics of qualitative research and mainly in ethnography is its flexibility in providing a wide range of data collection methods which allows researchers to be selective in terms of employing different techniques and covering the probable disadvantages and weaknesses of some of them. For

example, while ethnographic interviews investigate opinions and claims of people, ethnographic observation tends to test these claims in practice and search for non-verbal preferences. Techniques such as video ethnography enable the researcher to repeat their observation again and again, not to miss any important event or activity, especially for non-native researchers (Taylor et al., 2002).

I intend to be a witness to what actually happens rather than asking people what happened. My ethnographer role is to provide more ‘insights than a brief interview or focus group can record’ (Manches, 2012). Informants’ own settings such as their kitchen or home are important to my research, as the data in such an environment can be used as the description of self, their identities and lifestyles.

Close-Up Research, a research company conducting a range of ethnographic research projects and directed by Elliot Manches, ethnographer and filmmaker, emphasises that ‘ethnographic research can work alongside other forms of more traditional research, to develop initial analysis and bring to life findings [...] findings [that] may inform the design and development of products or services, or help guide strategy for policy or branding.’ (Manches, 2012)

3.3 Structure of the fieldwork

The literature review that navigates through different aspects of playfulness in product design leads me to more specific questions and areas of enquiry. These areas can be articulated in four strands:

1. Designers’ practices in order to address playfulness in products.
2. Users and individuals’ understanding of playfulness in products and how they articulate it.
3. The role of context, space, place and time in playability of products.
4. Defining new frameworks appropriated by users’ playful interactions with products.

So far, I have introduced a taxonomy of playful products from the products that can be found in the market place, the shelves of high-street retailers, and designers’ experimental ideas. These products, in total, can define the current situation of designers’ contributions in relation to the whole concept of playfulness in product design. I pursued the possible extent of this contribution in a series of fieldworks at Edinburgh College of Art with

second year students in product design, in the second semester of 2009-10. The main objective of this study is to understand to what extent designed artefacts (here based on new technology) can be designed or perceived playfully.

The second and third strands are investigated through undertaking other fieldwork involving users' participation and observing their behaviours and interaction with products. The following questions are examples of why this research necessitates observing users in their natural environment and gathering experimental material: 'On what occasions can the interactions between products and people be interpreted as playful?', 'What are the objective and subjective elements that make an artefact playable and re-playable?', or 'What is the relationship between functionality (utilitarian functions) and playability in the kitchen appliances according to users?'

The last strand is an effort to develop an inclusive framework in studying the playful interactions of users with products initially originated from relevant studies such as AoI and developed via LAoI by the analysis of fieldwork studies.

To provide a focus for this research, kitchen and kitchen appliances were chosen. The reason for this choice, as explained in the introduction chapter, is firstly, its socio-cultural significance today and in particular, in Britain. Secondly, the kitchen, in design studies, involves different design practices, both in terms of appliances and interiors.

The second series of data collection aims to explore the change in society towards playfulness, what its manifestations are in the domestic environment. Thus, a series of focus group discussions was conducted among older women aged over 55. The choice of women is mostly based on the traditional assumption of seeing women, mainly, as the end users of kitchen appliances. Despite the fact that, currently, women's responsibilities extend beyond the home and it is common to work outside it, still, women are considered to be the subject of many design studies in the domestic environment because the kitchen is 'associated with women's domestic labour' (Jerram, 2006). As such, I expected to hear interesting stories about the kitchen from women, and receive more information from the people who are most involved. In addition, I needed individuals who were witness to the rapid technological changes of the 1960s and 1970s that shaped the look of kitchens today

(Mielke, 2004) and would be able to explain the effect of those changes on the present time and provide a good comparison. I believe that playfulness has entered a new phase due to new media technologies and developments and this allows the research to draw a comparison between the 'new media generation' and those who have not experienced this phenomenon. As a result, this phase of my research aims to understand older people in society and discover their perspective with regard to playfulness in kitchen appliances.

The third part of my fieldwork, with an aim of deeper investigation, examines product interactions and possible playfulness in the context of the kitchen among a younger generation. Five middle class young employed women, aged between 25 and 35, were filmed and interviewed in their kitchens. They were asked what their feelings are towards their kitchen and appliances and how they use them.

The sampling method was a non-probability sampling and a combination of 'snowball' (Marshall and Rossman, 2006) and 'opportunity' (Silverman, 2002) sampling. To identify informants for this research, people who met the criteria were approached. They were 'asked to provide the names of others who fit the requirements' (Burns, 2000). A day was set to undertake the interviews and make the video recordings. Informants were asked to cook their favourite meal and use the appliances that they normally use.

My ethnographic fieldwork role involved: visiting the informants' kitchens, recording them on video, shadowing them and establishing open-ended dialogue and making first-hand observations while the informants were going about their routines in the kitchen. Thus, through this fieldwork research, I aim to investigate how users define playful moments in their domestic routines. With the help of two main frameworks, these ethnographic research methods were conducted (see Table 3-1). AoI was chosen as the first framework for these enquiries, and the second was the theory of the 'ludification of societies' (De Mul, 2005), as discussed in the literature review.

	Functional possibilities and performance of the product	Users' desires, needs, interests and skills, perceptual, cognitive and emotional	General context	Richness with respect to all the senses	Possibility of creating one's own story and ritual
Play as a pre-figuration of our daily life					
Play as free act in designated time and place with specified rules					
Play as the construction of ludic identity, and a reflexive quality of the construction of the self					

Table 3-1: Crossing the elements of aesthetics of interaction with elements of playful identity

The collected data were visually and contextually analysed. Artefacts that were mentioned by the informants, along with observed activities and themes, were studied, extracted and categorised according to different aspects of AoI. These aspects were then crossed, in tabular form, with the element of playful identity and other characteristics of playfulness (see Table 3-1).

3.4 Ethical considerations

In developing my ethnographic research approach, I was constantly aware of the ethical issues in my research and fieldwork, especially when I employed video and visual ethnography. Among different ethical dilemmas in qualitative research, the issues of the ‘politics of looking’ (Martens, 2012) and ethical observation were my key concerns. This issue becomes more significant when I chose the kitchen as the locus for my fieldwork, given that it is such a private and intimate environment.

My ethical concerns in this research included obtaining ‘voluntary informed consent’ (Mertens, 2012) (Appendix IV) and ‘dealing with confidentiality and anonymity’ (Clark, 2012) followed by the University of Edinburgh Research Ethics Checklist (see Appendix VII). In addition, the way the informants were treated during my research practice and subsequently, when making recordings (videos and audios), were other important concerns I had. In order to encourage a mutual environment of respect, firstly, the informants were ‘informed of the purpose of the research’ (Clark, 2012) and the value of their contribution. Secondly, I acknowledged the importance of their participation by referring to them as ‘informants’ instead of terms such as ‘subjects’ and ‘participants’. In this way, I consider them as individuals with some tacit and explicit knowledge who voluntarily accepted to share it with me.

One of the recent concerns in ethnographic research is the ‘objectification of informants’ (Pink, 2007), which draws attention to the exploitation of informants and a particular way of looking at or gazing on them mostly found in visual ethnographic research (Pink, 2007). This issue alerted me to the imbalance of power relations between informant and the researcher. To avoid this, the research should be beneficial to both parties and ethnographers should provide this mutual benefit. Video diaries (Holliday, 2004 quoted in Pink, 2007, p. 27) and observing the researcher besides the informants in front of the camera (Pink, 2007) are two ideas that have been suggested to ensure balance. The social anthropologist Sarah Pink, for example, notes how in a focus group discussion ethnographers moved to the other side of the camera in order to reduce their power and avoid ‘gazing’ on participants (Pink, 2007, p.27).

Alex Milton, designer and author of *Product Design* (2011), advises researchers to spend some time getting to know the people who are the subject of the research (Milton and Rodgers, 2011). In the same vein, P. Ginsberg and Donna Mertens, experts in social research methodologies, state that a ‘close relationship with the local community can ensure that the appropriate people will be supportive and able to provide expertise, endorsement and guidance for the research’ (Ginsberg and Mertens, 2009, p. 596, quoted in Mertens, 2012). This makes the whole process much easier and brings mutual comfort, trust and understanding.

Multiple layers of subjectivity

It is encouraged by ethnographers that ‘the fieldworker tries to immerse him/herself in the field conditions and gain access to the point of view of the others’ (Baszanger and Dodier, 2002) or ‘other people’s subjectivity’ (Suri and Howard, 2006). ‘By listening to people’s language, watching and learning about their activities, their relationships, their culture, and their behaviours’ (Suri and Howard, 2006), I expect to capture this subjectivity and understand the ‘internal logic and meaning around the topic’ (Suri and Howard, 2006) of play. My journey starts with objective products and interactions but the aim is to reach the different layers of subjectivity of playful interaction.

Shadowing techniques and the researcher

In ethnography, there are other important issues that need to be considered beforehand. For example, the researcher or ethnographer has a significant role in the whole process of data collection. Beyond general skills, there are certain issues that affect the process. Shadowing refers to the presence of the ethnographer observing the informants whilst of benefit for the data collection it can affect the procedure and skew the results obtained. Despite such drawbacks, ‘shadowing’ (McDonald, 2005; Milton and Rodgers, 2011) is now a common ‘research method that involves the product designer tagging along with people to observe and gain a good understanding of their day-to-day routines’ (Milton and Rodgers, 2011). Milton and Rodgers suggest the following shadowing techniques as ways of gaining first-hand information about the users of specific products:

- *fly on the wall*: a method for observing and recording users’ behaviour without interfering with their daily routines;

- *guided tours*: a method that involves designers accompanying users on a tour of their relevant designed spaces, products, and systems that they use regularly; and
- *a day in the life*: a method for identifying the tasks and experiences of users throughout a full or part day. (Milton and Rodgers, 2011, p. 61)

My observational approach is a combination of all three of the above techniques. Often, I need to be quiet and just be an observer without any interfering. Sometimes, I ask informants to show me the appliances they use in their kitchens and finally, filming the whole business of cooking is one aspect of one day in their life.

The non-native researcher

All the participants are native English speakers and all the interviews and discussions in English were conducted in English. Ethnographers note that personal feelings, language skills, accent and the familiarity of the researcher with the participants, and their interest and willingness to talk can affect the outcome of ethnographic interviews (Junying, 2012). All of this is a challenge, both in terms of implementing the techniques and understanding the results. As a Persian speaker studying in an English-speaking country, I have taken the advice of the design researchers Taylor, Bontoft and Flyte, who find video ethnography very useful for non-native design researchers. They state, ‘it is beyond the language communications and suits non-native researchers as well as natives’ (Taylor et al., 2002). In addition, I occasionally discuss my understanding of the field materials with native speakers.

However, there are some advantages in being a non-native ethnographer (Chen, 2011; Winchatz, 2006). For example, it has been argued by some ethnographers that being a non-native researcher ensures a balance between the power of the researcher and the participants in a research study, as they found themselves in a more comfortable position (Chen, 2011). In my experience, being a non-native researcher enabled me to maintain the role of listener and gather as much information as I could from the informants who spoke English as their native language.

3.5 Methods

Ethnographic observation

Observation is the most common method in collecting ethnographic data. According to Lianne Yu, cultural anthropologist, 'ethnography is observing people's behaviour in their own environments so you can get a holistic understanding of their world - one that you can intuit at a deeply personal level.' (Yu, ?). The observational and ethnographic approaches are so close that often they can be used interchangeably (Keegan, 2009).

My role in this research was as an observer, not as a participant, that is, I played a much more detached role than that of the informants who were engaged in cooking tasks. Whilst I tried not to involve myself in the practice of cooking and be just an observer, I took photographs as 'supplementary data' (Keegan, 2009, p.95). The advantage of doing this was to freeze a moment in time and give myself another chance, later, to reflect on the meaning of the action, the setting (Keegan, 2009, p.95) and my observations. I occasionally took notes of my observations. However, most of my field materials were gathered through the videos that a fixed camera took during the fieldwork sessions.

Video ethnography

Among the range of methods employed by ethnographers, for example, field diaries, written accounts and photographs, taking a video has become very popular, mostly because it is now more affordable and accessible. It is a very common technique used in documenting interviews and group discussions in order not to lose any visual data and references (Pink, 2007, p.103) and can be used for different research purposes.

Pink notes that, in ethnography, the researcher looks for an opportunity to make data archives with many details of everyday experience and practice (Pink, 2007, p.28). 'Video-facilitated observation' (Pink, 2007) can provide this opportunity which possibly cannot be offered by direct observation.

Visual images in video ethnography, along with visual anthropology and visual sociology, are increasingly becoming useful tools in empirical research and data collection. Referring to laboratory studies, visual practices in ethnography are the most suitable method for

studying material culture (Wilkie, 2010). It is also a method which, equally, can capture verbal and non-verbal communications (Pink, 2007, p.15).

Moreover, according to David Silverman, Professor of Sociology at Goldsmiths College, understanding interactions and how interaction is organised acquires audio and video recording methods (Silverman, 2002, p.90). ‘Visual explorations produce useful data for understanding how people experience their social and material environments’ (Pink, 2007, p.28) and can be especially beneficial in understanding ‘embodied experiences and materiality of the home’ (Pink, 2007, p.28).

As a result, it seems that video ethnographic techniques are the best approach in understanding playful interactions and dealing with the domestic environment of the kitchen. In the field of product design and specifically, in user-centred design, video ethnography is being used increasingly. In confirmation of all the above-mentioned advantages of video ethnography, user-centred designers find this approach very direct and suitable for visually-led disciplines such as design. To them it is emphatic, inspirational, descriptive, with different layers of information. (Taylor et al., 2002)

However, it is important to consider how the researcher wants to use the camera and what perspective to take. CCTV (Martens, 2012), video diary (Leavy, 2009), user perspective and the camera as the third observer, among others, are different techniques an ethnographer can employ. In my research, I fix the camera in a corner, at a higher level than the informant, to have an overview of what she does and uses and to capture all the movements [more visual-kinaesthetic aspects of practices (Bernard, 2000)] and their impressions.

One of my experimental ideas was to capture a first-hand user’s experience in the kitchen by observing the interactions from the user’s and third person point of view. These recordings would enable me to watch activities from a first person’s perspective and in more detail. In other words, what appliances are being used and how could they be observed and compared. I intended to ask the user to talk about what they were doing and thinking about while undertaking the activities. Through this method, I expected to capture

deeper feelings and emotions. Moreover, all the activities they do while they are cooking and using the kitchen appliances would be visible.

This method was previously used in a series of documentaries from 'HandMade' produced at the Distance lab in 2009 and was a record of old ways of doing things and processes. These recordings were screened in an exhibition entitled '[Made it!](#)' at the [Inverness Museum and Art Gallery](#), 5 June - 31 July 2010. In this project, artists and craft workers were asked to wear a wireless camera fitted device (Figure 3-1) which captured all the details of producing craft works (Figure 3-2).

Despite all my efforts to use this approach and have a second view from the user's angle, I found this experiment was unsuccessful. Fixing the camera on the body of the informants in the environment of the kitchen was totally impractical. Standing near the fire and washing up things in the sink interrupted the whole capturing process and after the second session, I decided to stop this method and carried out the data collection with one fixed camera.

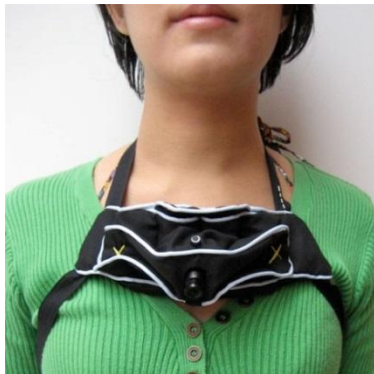


Figure 3-1: Wireless fitted camera used in the Distance lab



Figure 3-2: The user's point of view from Handmade project at the Distance lab



Figure 3-3: Two different views from the informant while cooking and preparing the food

Ethnographic interviews

Along with video ethnography, I conducted five topic-guided qualitative interviews. The purpose of these interviews was to gather first-hand information on cultural meanings (Marshall, Rossman, 2006, p.104), personal attitudes, experiences and feelings toward kitchen practices. For example, what the informants liked most about the kitchen, what their favourite appliances are and the reason for these preferences.

Sensory ethnography

The sensory quality of the environment and practices in this research often necessitates going beyond visual approaches. Sensory ethnography considers interactions with products, not limited to vision but in respect of all the different senses. In reviewing the basics of sensory ethnography, it provided me with some useful reflections on sensory events in the kitchen environment. Although I was unable to perform the method properly, in my field notes and materials, I was conscious of analysing sensory data.

Complementary methods

Complementary methods, such as semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, were also used in this research. I refer to them as complementary although the methods were applied at the earlier stage and the contribution, primarily, was helpful in giving insight and defining the later stages. Moreover, similar to any complementary method, they contributed to one aspect of my research which was not possible through other ethnographic research methods.

Semi-structured interviews

A series of semi-structured interviews were carried out among second-year product design students at Edinburgh College of Art. The aim of these interviews was to understand how design students deploy technology and articulate the social aspects of their intervention. In addition, my aim was to know to what extent designed artefacts (here based on new technologies) can be intentionally playful.

These interviews were conducted just after the students had finished their deployment of the prototypes. During the semester, I attended their tutorial sessions and throughout their practices, I observed the openness and some element of playfulness in their experiments with new technologies. According to design researchers, Thomas Visser, Martijn H. Vastenburg, and David V. Keyson in *Designing to support social connectedness: The case of SnowGlobe* (Visser et al., 2011), most of the social communication systems designed today involve the ambiguity of the interaction, an ambiguity which can be dubbed as playfulness for the benefit of my research. Hence, I was curious to know whether they would mention the degree of playfulness inherited in their designs based on new technologies and social communications.

Focus group discussions

Based on the literature review, playfulness involves subjectivity as well as objectivity and rather than being an inherent quality in the artefacts, it is connected to the socio-cultural context of the usage. Of the different ethnographic data collection methods, the focus group discussion is a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher and it is suited to capturing emotional issues and ‘placing them in a social and cultural context’ (Keegan, 2009, p.93).

As such, two focus group discussions were conducted with older informants. They were asked how they interpreted and perceived kitchen activities in terms of playfulness and their interactions with products and what the manifestations of playfulness are in the domestic environment of the kitchen. During these discussions, women aged over 65 were asked how they see their kitchen today and how their attitude to and feelings about the kitchen have changed since they started an independent life with their partners or as a single women.

These focus group discussions were conducted with comparable informants and of a similar background. I tried to choose informants of a similar educational, social and economic status, of the same gender and in the same age range.

It is believed that focus groups are more formal than other qualitative research methods (Morgan, 1997, p.6) but I agree with David Morgan, the American sociologist, who argues that it depends on ‘the nature of research settings and the likely reaction of the participants to the research topic’ and as a researcher, I am the one who defines the focus and purpose of the session (Morgan, 1997, p.6). Researching the topic of play in a formal way, obviously, would not be possible and in these discussions, I tried to maintain their informal nature and give the informants the time to become relaxed and feel welcome, and free to share their own views and ideas.

The advantage of this method is to gather ‘a large amount of interaction on a topic in a limited period of time’ (Morgan, 1997). This method is criticised for being based on self-reported data and limited to verbal behaviour. However, focus group discussions are designed to get more homogenous information about patterns of usage and ways of thinking. The purpose of using a focus group is ‘to listen and gather information. It is a way to better understand how people feel or think about an issue, product or service (Krueger and Casey, 2009). They are used to gather opinions for and against a topic, something that is not achievable by other methods such as observation and individual interview (Morgan, 1997, p.10). As a result, the focus group discussions I undertook triggered my initial thoughts about playful interactions in the kitchen and contributed, uniquely, to my understanding of this phenomenon through the eyes of those who experienced three or more decades of development, evolution and change in the kitchen.

4 Fieldwork studies: playful interactions through the lens of the users

I categorise all the empirical experiences done for the benefit of this research in three stages. First, I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with second-year product design students at Edinburgh College of Art. The second stage involved a series of group discussions among older women aged over 65 whose economic background falls broadly within ‘middle-class’, and the third is ethnographic studies and interviews with five young middle-class women aged between 25 and 35 in Edinburgh, whom I refer to by their initials in the this chapter. The kitchen and its appliances are the focus of the last two stages of my fieldwork.

In line with most qualitative research methods in social sciences, in my analysis, interviews played an important role (Peräkylä, 2005), with personal observations, images and probing actual designed products functioning as the supplementary field material. Analyses in this chapter will be dealt with chronologically, starting with the first fieldwork, which consisted of the students’ projects followed by analysis of the focus group discussions and finally, the analysis of the interviews and ethnographic data in kitchens (Table 4-1).

<i>Time</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Who</i>	<i>What</i>
April-May 2010	Edinburgh College of Art	Semi- structured interview	Product design students	Communication, functionality and playfulness
October 2010	ALP and Bristo Baptist Church	Focus group discussion	Older women over 65	Changes in the society and culture regarding the kitchen activities and appliances
April- November 2011	The kitchen	Observation Ethnographic interviews	Women between 25-35	Exploring how they see playfulness in kitchen appliances

Table 4-1: Data collection stages

4.1 Stage one: students' projects

Given that students enrolled on a Product Design course at art college hope to enjoy a future as designers, I was keen to know more about their ideas and their ability to critique their philosophy of design. After meeting Andy Law, the Programme Director at the time, at Edinburgh College of Art, and understanding his emphasis on playful approaches in problem solving, I was convinced that I should start my fieldwork with students. I therefore made my first approach to product design students at Edinburgh College of Art in the spring semester 2010 with the aim of exploring their attitudes towards the playful functions of products and the level of their contribution to playful designs. I started attending the second year product design project, *Audio-Plank (an Audio Piece with Planks of Wood)*, which was a project run by Andy Law, Douglas Bryden, Paul Kerlaff, Mil Stricevic and Ingo Aurin.

In this project, students were expected to design a person-supporting interactive audio product and make it with planks of wood and any audio device of their own choice. The fully functional prototypes were to be tested over two weeks by potential users thus requiring the students to develop a close relationship with the end users and contemplate their actual needs and desires. It was a good and advantageous opportunity for me to test out some of my initial thoughts, such as the relationship between functionality and playability, communication technology and its playful characteristics as well as observe their design's interactions with the users.

Seven product design students, four women and three men in two different age groups, 18-25 and 25-30, two European and five British, were interviewed in April and May 2010. The interviews were semi-structured and a hand-out (Figure 4-1) was given to each student to facilitate the articulation of their thoughts (Appendix V).

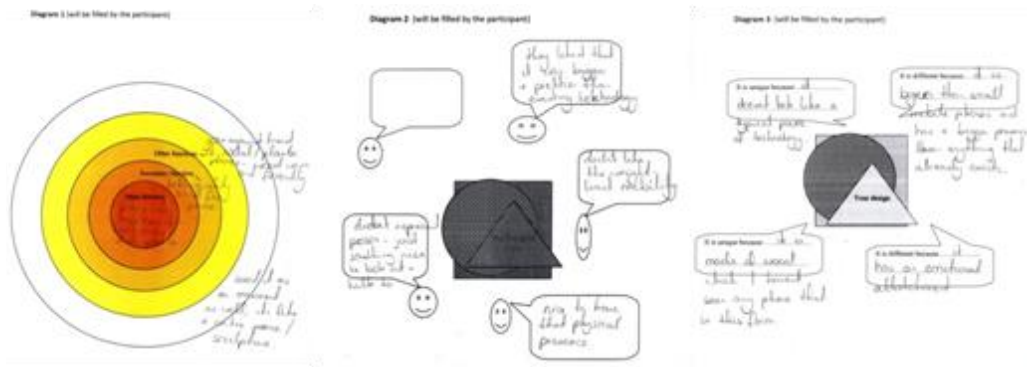


Figure 4-1: Three diagrams filled by one of the students

After deployment, I conducted my interviews. The audio pieces designed by the students included *The Toilet Megaphone* (Figure 4-2), which was a device intended to mask toilet noise; *The Wireless Bluetooth Speaker* for mobile phones (Figure 4-3), a device kept at home and which functions as a speaker in a phone-call conversation; a drawer with an individual recorder and speaker for three individuals; *The Music Resonance Maker*, which senses the vibration of sound from either music or voices for the benefit of deaf people; *The Audio Tray* (Figure 4-4) which functioned as audio postcards for older people; *The Music Post Box* (Figure 4-5), which was a music player in public spaces to run and manipulate music and *The Public Story Teller* (Figure 4-6) to record and listen to the memorable stories in a public place.



Figure 4-2: The Toilet Megaphone



Figure 4-3: The Wireless Bluetooth Speaker



Figure 4-4: The Audio Tray



Figure 4-5: The Music Post Box encourages social interactions



Figure 4-6: The Public Story Teller

Interviews

In responding to the first question, ‘what does the product do? How do you explain the function of this product?’ and inquiring about the main function of the designed artefact, the students mainly focused on the interactive aspects of their designs. The artefacts in this project were designed to mediate interaction, either between the product and the individual or between two or more people.

In the case of *The Toilet Megaphone*, the designer said she wanted to transfer the toilet experience ‘from a necessity to something you can play with’ by connecting a personal object, such as a mobile phone, to more public domains (the toilet) and by linking the inside of the toilet to the outside. *The Toilet Megaphone* is basically a music box hung on the door of the toilet that operates by telephone ring tunes. Once the user has called a number from the given choice of numbers linked to specific tunes, it starts playing that music thereby covering any noise from the toilet. Moreover, selecting from the wide range of music could simultaneously indicate who is using the toilet inside. This example shows how a personal experience with an object can have social consequences, by virtue of being engaging with others.

The Music Post Box has some similarities with *The Toilet Megaphone* as the designer mentioned that this device plays music and, at the same time, encourages social interaction. Designed to cling to a lamppost and with three audio outputs that connect to an iPod, it

enabled up to three people to simultaneously connect and mix their music. The designer said:

Everybody listens to their own iPod individually. This device [*The Music Post Box*] encourages people to listen to music collectively.
(Fionn, Appendix I)

In the case of the other designs produced for this project, *The Audio Tray* and *The Drawer*, the interactive function was added to an everyday product such as a tray and a drawer. However, the primary and ordinary functions were overlooked during the interviews, so for the designers, the interactive function took precedence over the other functions of the products, for example, carrying dishes and things in the case of the tray and the classification of objects and putting clothes in the case of the drawer.

The other question I asked related to the importance of the function to the designer: ‘how important the function of the product is to them and why they chose this as the main function’. Their responses to this mainly addressed communication difficulties. For example, one designer mentioned that the ‘lack of communication in big cities’ (Fionn, Appendix I) inspired him to make *The Music Post Box*. Another pinpointed the isolated situation of older people and the fact that they often live on their own and ‘nobody gives them the love they really deserve’ (Aimee, Appendix I). Similarly, the importance of *The Drawer* is to ‘make people interact’ and create ‘off-line’ messages or music for each other (Louis, Appendix I). It encourages the user to use the drawer in a different manner than solely for storage. These *off-line* messages can be anything, an important message or a joke. This element of surprise waiting for the audience/user makes the artefact playful, according to the designer.

In filling in the second diagram and responding to the question, ‘how do others perceive this work?’ responses are categorised as positive and negative attitudes. Although the question aimed to reach the potential functions of the products that students had not intended, they invariably defaulted to real feedback from friends and families. As such, people tended to be cynical about the function of such products or using them in the future while they admired the main ideas. Some of the feedback was as follows: ‘Great idea if it works’; ‘I am surprised and puzzled’ (Appendix I, see pages 263- 276).

The form of the objects received mostly positive feedback by the users; statements such as ‘looks like a sculpture’, ‘a nice thing to look at’ and ‘can be used as an ornament’ were mentioned (Appendix I, see pages 263- 276).

The last question, visualised in Diagram 3, questioned the quality of uniqueness and difference in the individual design. The aim of this question was to ascertain how the functional purposes were mentioned by interviewees as a differentiating factor. The lack of such an object in the market place was mentioned first, and again, form and the visual quality of the objects were stated next. Other elements which were believed to make the objects unique and different are: considering a specific target group; using existing technology in a different context; simplifying technology or presenting technology in another form and evoking emotional attachments or communication.

All four female designers in the project mentioned the decorative and aesthetic elements in their designs. Aesthetics and formal attributes of their designs, such as form, size, texture, material and the aesthetic value of them were identified as the characteristics that differentiated these designs from others. For example, ‘wood is warm and friendly’ and ‘it gives the object a new quality’, or ‘form and material here help the object to be looked at as an ornament or a sculpture’. Similarly, the simple form of *The Audio Tray* aimed to support user-friendly application and the beauty of wood and its pattern in *The Toilet Megaphone* was aesthetically important to the designer.

In the following statement, the designer of *The Wireless Bluetooth Speaker* explained how they believed playing with aesthetic elements elicits more emotional results:

I wanted to make phone calls more realistic ... mobile phones become smaller and smaller and I can’t find any reason for that other than ... their mobility thing and it is an object you would keep at home. The smaller and lighter the object, the less presence it has, really. So this one is distinct [in] design that is big enough and heavy enough...in the room ... It is not all about the object and how it works, it is about the emotional attachment people may get from it. (Helen, Appendix I, p. 265)

In this statement, form and other visual characteristics are gathered to elicit an emotional presence for *The Wireless Bluetooth Speaker* and was meant to ‘prolong users’ happiness’;

or in the case of *The Music Resonance Maker*, the shape, size and material of the wood is designed in a way ‘to fit different parts of the body’(Maria, Appendix I). *The Music Resonance Maker* is a device that has a bean-like shape which can be held in the hand and its curved shape gives it an organic look, inviting tactile interactions. It is designed to resonate sound and music for people with hearing difficulties.

The two international students also considered cultural differences in their design process. In the case of *The Toilet Megaphone*, the designer found the function of the bathroom to be very different in the UK from her homeland, Italy. She mentioned that women in Italy tend to spend a long time in the bathroom. They style their hair, put on make-up and dress up in the toilet before going out. Hence, in order to make the place enjoyable, they listen to music. Indeed, in the bathrooms in Italy, you can have electric power points, which is not very common in the UK.

The Outdoor Music Player is also based on a cultural difference observed by the designer. He said that in his experience in his home city, Galway, the Republic of Ireland, where he studied for his first degree, people had more contact with each other than here in Edinburgh. Everybody listens to their own iPod individually, but this design encourages people to listen to music collectively.

Analysing data from the students’ projects

This student project mainly focused on the implication of new media technologies in order to solve some of the difficulties of modern life or enhance life experience. By analysing the data gathered from the interviews, the following six main characteristics for these designs can be conceived: 1) interactive, 2) communicative, 3) emotional, 4) formally aesthetic, 5) multi-functional (Table 4-2) and finally, 6) for the benefit of this research, I argue that on a different level, these characteristics contribute to an untouched quality of playful engagement.

Design for interactivity includes a series of characteristics where communication is on top. The broadest view of interaction design, according to Dan Saffer, the author of *Designing for Interaction*, ‘is that it is inherently social, revolving around facilitating communication between humans through products’ (Saffer, 2010) which is truly demonstrated by this

student project. The interactivity in each of the designed artefacts is connected to communicative mediation of the products and, as a result, affects emotional status of the users.

While *The Wireless Bluetooth Speaker* for mobile phones is mediated to connect two individuals and convey the illusion of the presence of a person, *The Wireless Bluetooth Speaker Music Resonance Maker* is about more individual experience. *The Music Resonance Maker*, with a similar look to *The Wireless Bluetooth*, is another audio device which ‘targets a specific group of individuals’ (Helen, Appendix I) and resonates and makes sense of music for people with hearing difficulties. It offers, again, a personal experience through sound and music, but on other levels, it can be a device to connect that person to others by eliminating the feeling of isolation especially when music is being listened in a group of friends or family.

This focus on students’ responses regarding the aim of their designs highlighted the designers’ interest in attempting to address the missing emotional and communication needs in our everyday life and their solutions to fill such gaps by creating these products.

The social and communicative aspects of these objects have different layers, which in the case of *The Audio Tray*, can easily be demonstrated. *The Audio Tray* is basically a tray for personal usage and individual support and has the ability to be connected to memory sticks and play music or other audio files, such as recorded memories or audio books for older people in care homes or patients at hospitals. According to the designer, this can encourage communication and social activity on different levels.

A memory stick is also designed for this device. It is as big as a postcard which makes it easier to use. Relatives and friends of patients can print personal photos and images on the memory stick and copy different audio files. While the memory stick connects to this special tray, the user can enjoy audio tracks whenever they use the tray. The designer suggests that by swapping the cards, people can interact more and this can ‘bring them out of their shell’ (Aimee, Appendix I) and be a good starting point for conversation with other people in the residence.

On another level, *The Public Story Teller* provides a chance for everybody to tell their stories. Edinburgh is the second-most visited tourist location in Britain (Bbc, 2010) and every year, more than one million overseas guests visit the city¹. Through this device, human communication can be experienced on a bigger platform and globally. Cultural, historical and social exchange will be possible and available. The outcome of, and recorded material in, such a project are not only being used for story-telling purposes but it can also be part of the city's oral history. In this artefact, the process of gathering the oral stories is accessible through new media technologies, from email to voice messaging.

The interaction between people in the cases of *The Music Post Box* and *Public Story Teller* can take place in public spaces and among strangers while the other artefacts would be kept at home and in indoor environments, providing family or smaller group interactions.



Figure 4-7: The Music Post Box is installed outdoors

According to the students' statements, improving and enhancing the quality of people's life experiences are the most cherished values in the designed devices. Comments on the main aims of their designs included: 'transform a necessity into pleasure and surprise the user';

¹ According to a VISIT SCOTLAND (<http://www.visitscotland.org>) report, in 2010, Edinburgh had 1.3 million international visitors, VISITSCOTLAND. Insight Department.

to ‘prolong user’s happiness when living away from a partner’; ‘to feel vibration of music’, to encourage ‘social interaction’; to operate as a ‘story telling’ device; to ‘improve the quality of one's life’ and finally ‘to make people interact’. (Appendix I, pages 263- 276) This demonstrates that entertainment and satisfying emotional needs have been prioritised over utilitarian needs in these designs. For example, to ‘surprise the user’ and to ‘entertain the user’ have been the focus of the designer in the case of *The Toilet Megaphone* rather than the design of an object to provide more convenience. To ‘prolong the happiness’ (Helen, Appendix I), in the case of *The Wireless Bluetooth Speaker*, took greater precedence over functions such as providing a better sound quality for phones. Other emotional aspects in the rest of the products were to ‘eliminate feeling isolated’ (Maira, Appendix I), to ‘play and hybridise music/records and make people interact’ (Fionn, Appendix I), to have ‘Internet-interaction’ (Rodney, Appendix I) in public places and to tell outdoor stories, and ‘to keep a person entertained’ (Aimee, Appendix I) while one is immobile. For some of them, utilitarian functions became highlighted at the second level. For example, the possible usage was mentioned: the feeling of vibration of recorded sound for everybody; the object can be used as a voice recorder as well; this tray is ‘making things easier [by covering] more than one function’ (Aimee, Appendix I). Different functions and multi-functionality are addressed by the designer of the drawer after he added speakers to it: ‘It [the drawer] becomes something else but still it is what it is almost’ (Louis, Appendix I).

In order to classify these objects according to their functions, two distinct categories are taken into account. The first is the multifunctional pieces that the audio function is considered to demonstrate as an additional value; a new application for an existing product such as a tray, mobile phone or drawer; and the second one is new objects based on new demands, with new functions of which *The Toilet Megaphone* and *The Music Resonance Maker* are examples.

Despite using advanced audio technologies in these designs, the operation of the objects was kept as simple as possible in order to maintain the aim of the design. In addition, the contrast between technology and the chosen material of wood in this project tries to connect new concepts such as new media technologies to old traditions of wooden handicrafts.

Last but not least, although some degree of playful quality has been traced in these concepts, it was rarely addressed by the designers. Two of the interviewees mentioned the playful quality of their designs. These cases were *The Toilet Megaphone* and *The Audio Drawer*. The multi-functionality of *The Audio Drawer* was believed to be playful and moreover, the designer stated that, ‘leaving messages for people not there encourages playfulness’ (Louis, Appendix I).

In the case of *The Toilet Megaphone*, the intention of the toilet as a functional place changes to a more pleasant and playful space with the aid of the product, or as the designer states ‘it transforms a necessity into pleasure [and it] ... makes an enjoyable moment’ (Jessica, Appendix I) for the users inside the toilet, as well as outside.

Discussion and summary of the students’ projects

The main theme which can be traced through all these products is the emotional preferences in relation to utilitarian functions. These products are often aimed at helping people to live happier lives and not constrain the functions to satisfy comfort and convenience. The audio devices developed in this project are designed to serve different groups of people with a range of emotional needs: people with hearing difficulties, older people, people who are separated from their beloved ones or individuals lacking social support and connection.

From *The Toilet Megaphone* to *The Story Teller*, these artefacts have very simple functions as well as simple forms. Nevertheless, interactivity in these designs aims to address complex human need which is emotional connection. Although they are designed to promote interactions and improve communication problems, they project a considerable amount of emotional engagements; the interplay between emotion and communication (Diagram 4-1). This interactivity was not just an interaction between a human and the object, but the object was considered as a medium of interaction between people.

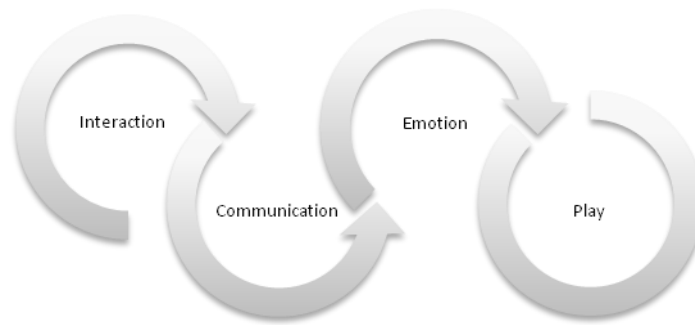


Diagram 4-1: Aims of interactions in Audio-plunk projects

In addition, entertainment, fun and play can be argued to be the consequence of communicative interactions in the products. Table 4-2 demonstrates how the mentioned characteristics of these products can be playful, either deliberately assigned by the designer or through its interactions. For example, the element of surprise in *The Toilet Megaphone* and *The Interactive Drawer* can be playfully engaging. Or in the case of *The Music Post Box* and *The Public Story Teller*, the creative situation that the products provide lends a playful quality.

	TM*	WBS	ID	MPB	PST	AT	MRM
Communicative	Connect outside to inside of a private and intimate space	Connect two persons	Connect people who live together	Connect up to three people to listen to music	Connect people by sharing stories	Connect a lonely person to her family and beloved	Connect a person with a hearing problem to the world of sound and share the experience with other people
Emotional (Surprising/ Entertaining)	Feeling of security and pleasure	Prolong the happiness and feel the presence of someone	Surprise the user, change your mood	Entertain and gain pleasure from listening to music	Share feelings and emotions	Keep the user entertained, make her happy, connected, not lonely, give enjoyable moments	Enable the user and give him/her satisfaction
Formal aesthetic (simplicity)	Simple form, symmetrical unit, monochrome	Simple form, disk shaped, symmetrical	Geometrical, dynamic and rhythmic form	Simple rectangular shape	Simple form (long cuboid)	Simple form (a wooden rectangular tray)	Simple organic form (bean shaped)
Multi- functional	Speaker and noise cover	Speaker, sculpture	Drawer, speaker, message recorder	Speaker, music mixer	Story teller, an audio recorder	Tray, music and audio player	Speaker, audio and music vibrator
Playful	Surprise	Unexpected functions, surprise the audience	Surprise, playful form (not conventional)	Offer a creative asset	Creative activity	Simulation of reality, creative practice	A personal entertaining object/toy

Table 4-2: Design characteristics in the Audio-plunk project

*TM: The Toilet Megaphone; WBS: The Wireless Bluetooth Speaker; ID: The Interactive Drawer; MPB: The Music Post Box; PST: The Public Story Teller; AT: The Audio Tray; MRM: The Music Resonance Maker.

In comparison with similar projects at Royal College of Art (RCA) and Goldsmiths University of London (GUL), which were discussed in the literature review, ECA students have tried to highlight some of the challenges one might face in everyday life. Their responses illustrate concrete and tangible designed ideas rather than addressing issues by abstract and ambiguous functions. In the discussed examples from RCA and GUL, technologies have been used in order to question and raise contradictions of our modern life and the ideas were normally discrete and abstract, which left the audience/user puzzled, cynical or entertained. If a range of usages for new media technologies can be considered from the product design approach at university level, the ECA project would stand close to the tradition of the problem-solving side and the other mentioned projects would be on the problem-raising side (Diagram 4-2).



Diagram 4-3: Experimental practices in new media technologies at university level

There are other university projects which have followed similar ideas to the project at ECA. *The Photostroller*, an interactive device designed by the Interaction Research Studio (Department of Design at Goldsmiths, University of London) in 2010, has been introduced into a care home in York to enhance the daily lives of older residents. This project was developed in collaboration with researchers at the University of Newcastle and Northumbria. *The Photostroller* displays a continuous sequence of images extracted from the Internet, topic-oriented or random, and like *The Audio Tray* it is designed for entertainment and social purposes for older people. ‘Ludic experience’ (Gaver et al., 2011) is a concept that the developers use to articulate such entertainment and social qualities of the device.

Another experimental project was undertaken by the Delft University of Technology, where social connectedness was examined through a series of products with *Ambient*

Intelligence (Aarts and Marzano, 2003 quoted in Visser, Vastenburgh and Keyson, 2011). The aim of the project was ‘to support people’s social wellbeing by stimulating their sense of social connectedness’ through new media communication technologies (Visser et al., 2011). The researchers concluded that virtual connectedness through an object such as an intelligent *SnowGlobe* can play a role in bringing people closer to each other and even convince them to try other forms of social media and communication to become closer and more connected. Following a similar idea, the ECA students’ products try to connect people through different levels of interaction and engagement and could have a strong influence on user’s wellbeing.

Previously, I called artefacts such as *The Drift Table*, *The History Table Cloth* and *The Plane Tracker* playful due to their open, ambiguous and entertaining functions. The open-ness and ambiguity of such artefacts actively stimulates the user to contemplate their possible function, and as a result, they have a chance to project their personal needs, desires and values. All of these university projects share the idea of new usage of media technologies. Remarking on De Mul and De Lange’s theory of playful identity as the result of new media technologies and changes in society, I have found that playfulness has a close relationship with new media technologies and, in some ways, becomes an inherited quality. The implication of new usage of media technologies in all afore mentioned projects playfully challenges the concepts of being, presence, time and place and, at the same time, advocate ambiguous and open-ended functions.

The application of new media technologies in different contexts shows considerable potential for designers to take on and implement their designs to support people interactions and promote wellbeing. As such, it is not surprising to see in different higher education institutions that interaction design has become part of the curriculum and promoted by lecturers in multiple, independent universities. Interaction design paces its steps slowly to the context of everyday life however the experience of playfulness is not limited to interaction design and new media technology.

4.2 Stage two: focus group discussion

The second series of data collection was conducted in October 2010. Two focus group discussions (FGD) were held with the older women, with a total of 17 participants interviewed.

The recruitment process was achieved through my social network. One of the groups was introduced to me through *The Adult Learning Project* (ALP) Association which is a charity based in *The Tollcross Community Centre*, in the centre of Edinburgh. The group holds social and educational programmes for older women, and I met with them after one such meeting in October 2010. I started the discussion with 12 people and at the end of session, I had seven participants. This group discussion will be referred to in this section as FGD 1, and the transcript of the discussion can be found in Appendix II, pages 278- 287.

The second group was a collection of older women at the *Bristo Baptist Church*. After an announcement during one Sunday service, five women participated in the focus group in the church on the arranged date in October 2010. According to statistics presented by [Why Church](#), which is an organisation focusing mainly on churchgoing phenomena in the UK, most churchgoers in the UK are among the older population and the church attracts more older women than men. As a result, I expected to find more people who were interested in my topic among churchgoers. This group discussion will be referred to in this section as FGD 2, and the transcript of the discussion can be found in Appendix II, pages 289- 292.

Prior to conducting these focus groups, I ran a pilot study in September 2010, in order to validate and test the reliability of my idea as a research tool, and to attempt to anticipate future problems while conducting the main data gathering. A group of six (one woman and five men) from my group of friends took part in the pilot study. The key aim of this was to test the semi-structured questions, to evaluate whether they were clear and how I could best conduct the discussion in terms of timing, giving each participant an equal opportunity to speak and redirecting the conversation back to the topic. The data collected in this pilot study was not analysed

in this chapter, however, in some cases, it was used to support some of the findings and initial enquiries of this research.

Analysing data from the focus group discussions

As explained in the methodology (Chapter 3), the FGDs were semi-structured, based on a set of questions of three main themes. They are as follows:

- Attitudes towards the kitchen
- Emotions in the kitchen
- Play in the kitchen

In both discussion groups, very similar topics were raised. These themes have been categorised in the following sections.

Heart of the house or a meal machine?

In search of how these people interpret and perceive the kitchen, I started my questions with, ‘Is the kitchen the heart of the house or just a meal machine for you?’

They reported that their attitude towards the kitchen has changed depending on the different stages of their lives. When they were younger and had a bigger family, the kitchen was the hub and heart of the house, whereas now their connection to their kitchen is reduced to ‘a meal machine’ and a place for occasional gathering of family and friends.

One or two of us live alone but still the core of your life is what you feed yourself and that’s your place to do it. (FGD 1)

My heart of my home is my living room; ... I think to me it is just a meal machine. I don’t go there. (FGD 1)

People don’t sit and eat together these days. This is a part we missed. (FGD 2)

We have a kitchen but we don’t sit in the kitchen. We are using our living room. Nobody is getting there. I can’t wait to get back to them. (FGD 1)

The kitchen is a means to an end, actually, because you need to cook in it. (FGD 2)

I am only in the kitchen to cook and clean, do both. So I don't attach any great emotional [importance to the kitchen].
(FGD 1)

Then the discussion shifted toward the family size, the physical characteristics of the kitchen or having a 'kitchen-diner' - a kitchen with an 'island' in the middle and no wall between the dining room and kitchen. In such kitchens, 'kids can go around. You could go to the kitchen and see the kids in the other room' (FGD 1).

When you have children it is the core of the house. (FGD 1)

It depends on your kitchen; it also depends on your house. I would love to have a big table in the middle of the kitchen and everybody sits around. I wouldn't say mine is the heart.
(FGD 1)

What has changed during their life in the kitchen?

This part of the discussion focused on the changes they encountered during the last three or four decades in regards to the kitchen and its appliances. It mainly revolved around the changes that are regarded as having helped to save time and that minimise the hard work and burden of kitchen practices.

When I grew up we didn't have a fridge. My mother shopped on a daily basis. Every day she shopped for fresh food and used to keep the milk at night in a cold basin, a cold water basin. (FGD 1)

[It is much] for convenience now. ... People watch these cooking programmes and then go out and buy ready or take-away meals. Eventually single people and youngsters who've got a flat, they don't want to cook. I think there is a lot more for convenience now. (FGD 1)

Lots of people don't know how to cook now. (FGD 1)

We are all watched our mothers' cooking ... we were in the kitchen watching ... that's not going on now. Not in general. Many people try to do that. (FGD 2)

Without a doubt, there is much labour saving now ... dishwasher, washing machine, a lot of labour has been taken out from the kitchen. (FGD 1)

Many appliances today are labelled as ‘time savers’. For example, with the ingredients you have in the freezer, you can decide what to cook instead of shopping daily. Further time savers were mentioned by one participant:

We used to make bread by hand now you have got bread makers, you’ve got rice makers, every maker that you want; coffee makers. Things are a lot easier. (FGD 1)

However, there is always the fear of making your kitchen a ‘graveyard for appliances’, according to one of the participants. For her, buying *The Mini Chopper* was a mistake and she rarely used it. Another participant strongly disagreed with this statement and said *The Mini Chopper* is one of her favourite appliances in the kitchen, which she uses to grind different substances, from garlic to coffee.

Adding to these examples, later in the first discussion group, buying a dishwasher was reported by one of the women as a mistake, saying she never used it ‘because it doesn’t work very well’. It was also mentioned that some of these objects were made impractical by a change of lifestyle and traditions. For example, participants agreed that, for drinking tea, mugs have replaced the traditional cup and saucer. In confirmation, one of the women mentioned:

In 2010, there are times where I find something like a milk jug would never be taken out of the cupboard now because of our fast pace of living. [Instead] you would just go to the fridge and you would just get the plastic carton out and [you would] put the milk in for people into their mug, or whatever to their cup. (FGD 1)

However, contemporary coffee machines and bread makers were seen by the participants as new kitchen appliances which, nowadays, can be found in their friends’ and families’ kitchens. Wherever you find such things, ‘it is a starting point for conversation’ and the function and novelty in such products is at the centre of such discussions.

The post-war generation

One of the reasons for their interest in functionality was mentioned by a number of the participants who belonged to the post-war generation. The kitchen of their

childhood is associated with basic appliances and a shortage of food, and so, having a proper functional product in the kitchen was a dream. While for their American counterparts and what they saw in films at the time, it was a different story, as they had more designed objects and varieties of food. This was mentioned as a main reason for their functional interests and disconnection from the potential fun and amusement to be had in and from the kitchen.

I think it is also because at the time we were brought up, we had just come through the Second World War and all sorts of families were quite poor. We didn't have a lot of money. There were big families, many children in some cases, and there wasn't the fun aspect ... the kitchen was very much the place you just went to cook and you were just glad to be able to have food in the cupboard. (FGD 2)

We were growing up, most of us growing up after the World War, and we had nothing and then slowly, slowly, our mother got things, slowly, slowly, we got things. (FGD 1)

Functionality is all that matters

Through the range of questions I set, I tried to understand the participants' emotional responses towards the kitchen and its appliances. As such, part of my enquiry, in both sessions, was dedicated to redirecting the conversation to go beyond the functional aspects of kitchen appliances to the emotional aspects, the possible memories or stories attached to some of the appliances, or the fun and playful moments and experiences. However, functionality and the utilitarian functions of the kitchen and its appliances had a great weight in these discussions.

I think we were brought up in an era when everything was very functional, so to speak. It wasn't fun and the sense of humour you thought of did not exist, ... when you think of a place called the kitchen, it was very much just going in and cooking and baking and you never stopped to look at the fun side of it at all. (FGD 1)

The refrigerator and freezer were mentioned by a number of people as their cherished objects, though for others, the necessity of them was doubted. One woman said she goes shopping everyday, like her mother and does not fancy using much frozen food. The dishwasher, washing machine, electric hob rings and microwave were also

mentioned as their favourite appliances in the kitchen and that kitchen work without them would be very difficult or unpleasant. In response to why the electric cooker can be cherished, one said:

I think because when I was a child, my father worked as an engineer with *The Hydro-electric Board* and so, all my days, I preferred electricity to gas.

The same participant, in appreciation of the electric cooker, continued:

... there is quite a funny story. When I was doing cookery as a teenager at school and I was doing an exam with a group of two, my friend, she opened the oven and it was a gas one and I don't know what came to my mind or what happened, but she ended up getting her eyebrow singed and it ... kind of made me more appreciative of the electric cooker. (FGD 2)

Shifting away from the functional aspects, in the first FGD, one woman stated:

The shop where I live has got a whole pink window of kitchen ... household things, a lot of kitchen things, and it really caught my eye. (FGD 1)

Immediately after she said this, another woman asked, 'don't you think it is all about marketing?' Another woman then said that a kettle lasts for a long time and questioned why people need to buy another one, just for a different colour. The conversation concluded by one person saying, 'we are all brainwashed' (FGD 1). However, they all accepted technological developments and advances, as long as they have economic advantages or are environmentally friendly, things such as economical washing dryers and refrigerators. For example, a kettle would previously keep on boiling until it was physically removed, but now it automatically stops after the water boils. The size of kettles has also changed to suit needs, 'single cup kettles, for example, when you are on your own' (FGD 1). Nevertheless, the conversation in this part finished with participants making fun of TV advertising channels and talking about a coffee machine that wakes you up and starts making coffee while you are taking a shower or a coffee maker-toaster which makes coffee and toast breads at the same time, and jokingly, one added, 'that is a real man, I think'. Apart from the joke made here, and whether it is a machine or 'a real man' who does the chores, it is clear that the extent of playfulness for these women is limited to functionality and the

ultimate desire for automation, which is passive, and not in the joy of doing things or as an active role in gaining pleasure.

The other evidence for my conclusion was their desire for a fitted kitchen. The fitted kitchen, as a symbol of functionality and modernism, was mentioned several times in the first FGD. One of the women, who recently refurbished her kitchen, enthusiastically said that every morning she wakes up and happily goes to the kitchen and can't believe that 'everything is new in the kitchen', something she never had before.

Equality of men and women with regard to domestic chores

I asked how these women see their kitchen today and how their attitude and emotions toward the kitchen have changed since they started an independent life with their partners or as a single occupant. According to them, the amount men contribute to housework and domestic chores has increased, and today, men can be involved in the cooking and cleaning of the home as much as women. This is something that has changed during their lifetime and is positively received.

Now it is going to another stage, the male and the female ... they have equal rights towards each other, at least [they] respect each other at that level. I don't think it was men's fault. I think it is actually the way they were brought up to believe they are the breadwinners and then we were brought up to believe we should take care of the family and children (FGD 1)

I think recently, maybe because of all the cookery programmes on the television, I think there has been a resurgence of people becoming more interested in making food from scratch rather than just buying ready meals and enjoying trying out new recipes and inviting friends. I think of my son who never cooked and now there is like three couples and they take turnabout in doing the meal. ...you know, he changed to how I remembered. It is a kind of role reversal. (FGD 2)

The sad side of the kitchen

Despite the many positive comments that the kitchen can be a place to gather people and be a hub to socialise, it transpired from my fieldwork that for some people it can

also be a sad and gloomy environment. For some of these women, the kitchen was an empty place, with unbearable silence after the children have grown up and left home. They experience the once vibrant environment of the kitchen replaced by muteness and emptiness; an emptiness that is filled by photos of loved ones rather than their actual presence. Family photos hung on the wall or on the refrigerator are meant to fill this gap and represent an emotional side of the kitchen for these mothers and grandmothers. They bring smiles and tears in equal measure as one of the participant's states:

In my kitchen on the fridge I've got photos of my grandchildren and I've got some on the wall ... every now and then I think I should take some down but I found it hard ... and I always open the fridge door and smile because we've got these wee faces ... that makes me happy. (FGD 1)

This phenomenon was recognised as *Empty Nests Syndrome* by social and psychological researchers for the first time in 1989 (Myers and Raup, 1989). The role of motherhood and raising children often is so connected to the kitchen that picturing one without the other has been difficult, and for some women the departure of children is equivalent to a loss of motherhood and a loss of their important role in life. Kitchen practices seem to be affected most in this regard.

I used to absolutely adore my kitchen when I was younger. And that was really only because my children were young and I used to just love getting out the baking things and they would have their bits and we'd all...by the time we were finished it would all be a bloody mess...it was absolutely covered in flour and, you know, half the things probably didn't bake properly or whatever, but it was just fabulous. I mean, I miss that dreadfully. (FGD1)

Having said that, this loss can happen at an earlier stage, as was true for one of the participants in FGD1, who remembered her grief immediately after she lost her husband in Canada and moved back to Scotland with two of their children. She said she did not have the courage to go into the kitchen and always felt the emptiness until she almost hated her kitchen.

When I moved into my house, I had a bit of trouble with my eating and my kitchen was a nightmare for me. So that's why I've got quite...not now, but bad feelings about my kitchen because I hated my kitchen at one point ... I've got very strong emotional feelings about the kitchen as a whole, not as a place, not necessarily for the appliances that are in it ... because I was very, very upset and...because I was on my own with two children. (FGD 1)

In this story and other similar stories, the image of the lively atmosphere of the kitchen is in contrast with the depression and loneliness of a stage in one's life. Recalling again the key statement of Sutton-Smith in defining play as the opposite of depression rather than work, one can argue that play and playfulness are the inherited qualities of kitchens today.

Wee cute things

In order to demonstrate the role of design in encouraging this group of people to think beyond its utilitarian functions, I presented them with some images and a collection of mugs which I had specifically gathered to test responses. First, I showed them some images of Alessi products, from *The Family Follows Fun* series (Figure 4-8). The serious functionality of these products was a matter of debate in both sessions. It was clear that the toy shape of these products cast doubt on the quality of their functions. Alessi products were also perceived as appliances designed specifically for children and not adults. The participants declared that they would never buy such things, even if they were offered with a cheap price, saying 'people have got more money than sense'. However, some mentioned they might give them as gifts to their young relatives to encourage them to cook, and they thought it was likely their younger relatives would like to have these products. They also considered them 'attractive', 'colourful', 'quirky' and 'wee cute things' which could function as ornaments in the kitchen for those who spend more time there. Some of the responses are as follows:

It would probably intrigue me to go to somebody's kitchen and see some of these gadgets. I would find the novelty. I might look at some of them and think 'very nice' but I have managed all those years without one. So, I might not be rushing to buy one. (FGD 2)

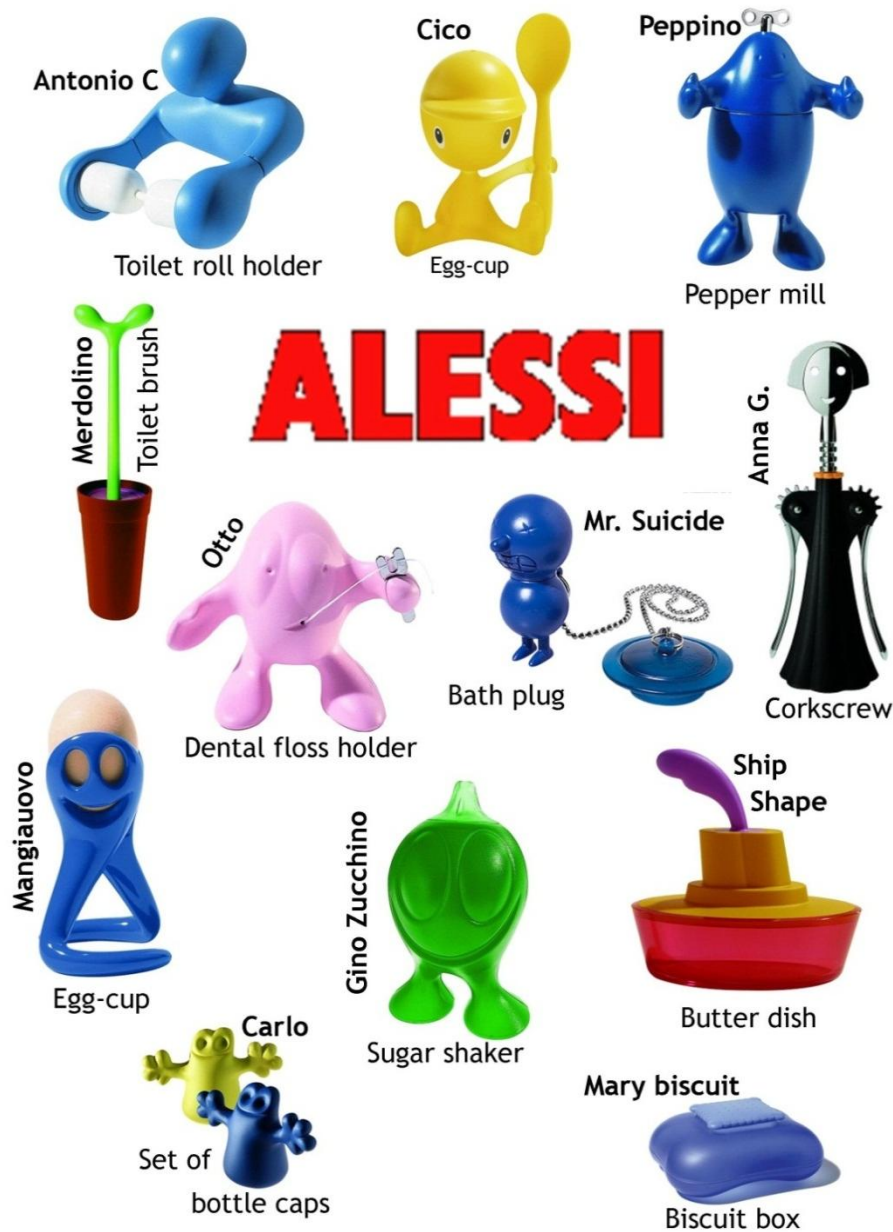


Figure 4-8: Alessi products, from Family Follows Fun series

Things like the wee egg-cups would make me smile, I would buy that for my grandchildren. (FGD 1)

I think these are sort of things you would buy as gifts, I wouldn't buy that for functional reasons. (FGD 1)

I think you would possibly [keep] some of these things on the worktop. If you are having things you wanted people to think 'oh, it is really fun' you wouldn't put them in a drawer. So as you wipe down your worktop, could you bother lifting a lot

of things? I am supposedly more practical than look at something ... you know ... and now I am getting older I'm more ... you know... practical. I suppose for my wee grandson, I might go and visit him and he might like something like this and that is not my kitchen. (FGD 1)

As part of the discussion, I presented them with a group of mugs (Figure 4-9) to test responses to a everyday object. The set includes a variety of forms, materials and sizes. These items present a range of mugs from un-practical, decorative and playful to totally functional and practical. With the help of this collection, I aimed to test the participants' attitude and thoughts and directed them to think about a more tangible idea of play and fun in kitchen objects.



Figure 4-9: My collection of mugs

Among my collection of mugs, the Irish mug (Figure 4-10) with the handle on the inside was familiar to those who had Irish connections and the novelty, fun and humorous design of it was much acknowledged. However, for most of the participants, their favourite mug was the Scots Dialect Mug - Skiver - mainly for its appropriate size, grip and fine quality. Again, utilitarian function came first.



Figure 4-10: The Irish Tea Mug

Whilst the input from this group was useful, their obvious lack of interest in playfulness and emotional design convinced me to bring the discussion to an end and made me gradually move toward the main phase of my fieldwork, which was the ethnography of young females.



Figure 4-11: An angled mug with two handles and a deformed mug by Alessi

4.3 Stage three: ethnographic data

The last data collection series was made between April and November 2011. Five young (between 24-35), employed females were interviewed, and four of them agreed to be filmed – see the transcripts in Appendix III, page 294- 324. All interviews were conducted in the kitchen. The sampling method used was a non-probability form and a combination of ‘snowball’ and ‘opportunity’ sampling. Having thought through the various possibilities as to who best to involve in this data gathering I decided to focus on interviewing young women graduates who work and manage their life independently. The reasons for this choice can be explained from socio-economic, socio-cultural and lifestyle perspectives.

The choice of women only was based on the tendency for females to engage with the socio-cultural role of overseeing the nutrition and health of members of their family (and thereby of society). Despite movement towards equality within the domestic sphere, they are still engaged more with household chores in comparison to men (Mintel, 2014a). Although this trend has changed in recent years and the number of men interested in cooking activities has increased (Park et al., 2013). The attitudes and behaviour of women (if and when they become mothers) often has a direct influence on their children. So, being single and free from family responsibilities represents more independent choices, while in a family decisions are more likely to be taken for the benefit of the whole family. I therefore decided that in order to gain the most useful information in the course of this research I needed to prioritise my focus on women.

The second strategy underpinning my decisions is that middle-class professional women tend to be economically independent and can also afford to acquire their needs based on their taste rather than forced into decisions by economic restraints which their low income counterparts tend to experience. In market studies, according to the [Mintel reports](#), in the UK the age range of the 24-35s in middle class and upper middle class are the key consumers of home-ware products (Mintel, 2014b) and demonstrate other independent shopping behaviours such as the shopper of organic

food and drink (Mintel, 2012a), sugar free products (Mintel, 2012b) meat free food (Mintel, 2010) in recent years. As this study has links to health and wellbeing, I therefore selected them to be an appropriate target group.

What is cooked (and how) in the family kitchen can be an overview of the whole families' taste, and most importantly, in the presence of children it can be help inform their future choices. In my focus-group discussions, based on the experience of the older women, I found that the kitchen was a more vibrant environment when children are around and provided a more fertile area for me to explore playfulness in general and interrogate traditional definitions of play

According to aforementioned definitions of play by De Mole and De Lange, the consumption of new media has a crucial role in shaping the identity. As a result, I believed it imperative to choose an age group who is familiar with new media technologies and uses them every day. The chosen age group has been cited by national statistics as among the most frequent Internet users (Richmond, 2013; Matthews, 2013).

The final strand in this decision-making strategy is that I, too, belong to this age group and I believed that this was crucial in providing a sympathetic research environment which provided me with an opportunity to created stronger connections with my participants. I had experienced an independent life before starting my PhD research and expected, apart from cultural differences, that this experience would enable me to understand them better. As a foreign researcher who needed to observe the informants in their actual habitat, I required this element of closeness as I was conscious of other barriers I faced, for example, that of trust. As a result, employed the snowball/opportunity approach and I started with the people who know me better and asked them 'to provide the names of others who fitted the requirements' (Burns, 2000, pp. 388, 389).

A day was set for interviewing and video recording. Informants were asked to cook their favourite meal and use the appliances that they normally used. In three cases, the data collection continued with subsequent interviews in which I provided them

with the recipe for a Spanish omelette and asked them to cook it in my presence. That session for the fourth informant was cancelled due to her having an allergy to eggs.

Ethnographic studies, observations and ethnographic interviews

Informant number one: J's cooking and her kitchen

J was 28, single, a university graduate and employed. She was vegetarian and loved good food. She lived in a rented flat in the New Town, Edinburgh, and shared the flat with two other employed young adults¹.

The kitchen was approximately 15 square metres with a window to the back garden. It was furnished by the landlord and most appliances, such as the stove, refrigerator and microwave, had been provided. However, during her stay in this flat, she had acquired many smaller appliances for herself, such as a scale, a tea pot, a wooden spatula, a couple of cake moulds, and a small Le Creuset² sauté pan. Among the different appliances she brought with her to the flat, she described her favourite as:

The scales would be, probably. Old-fashion style from a farmhouse, it is my favourite. We have got a Le Creuset pan somewhere, [searched for it in cupboards and found it] ... very heavy [took the small, orange, cast iron pan] ... But still my favourite is the scale. It is not just about function; it is about history. It reminds me of my gran when I was wee. We got it in an antiques market. (Interview with J, Appendix III)

The kitchen was divided in to three main areas: 1) the kitchen with cupboards and work tops, 2) sitting space with a sofa, coffee table, radio/audio player and bookcase, and 3) the small dining area with a table, two chairs and some green pots. The sitting area was decorated with a flower pot of orchids, some books and DVDs and decorations on the wall. In my second visit, a piano was added to the setting. From

¹ Quotes can be found in Appendix III , interview with J, pp. 293-298.

² Le Creuset is a French cookware manufacturer best known for its colourful enamelled cast iron French ovens, also known as 'casseroles'.

the layout of the kitchen, one could ascertain that this space was used for different purposes and it was not solely a meal machine to produce the food and eat.

In my observation, I found J very relaxed about kitchen practices, from manipulating the recipes to using a baking tray as the missing lid of a pan. When the omelette recipe was given to her, in the second session, she added some garlic, olives and grated cheese to make her own version of a Spanish omelette. She said she does not follow many recipes and thinks she inherited this from her mother, although she confesses that at home, her mother is teased for not sticking to recipes.

She asked if she could have the music on during the recording as it was part of her routine. She said she listens to jazz music or BBC Radio One while cooking. 'I think putting on music is part of the relaxing, you know, at the end of the day,' she said while she went to replay the CD.

Regarding the appliances she used, I noticed that despite the difficulties she had with the electric hob, she described it as 'fine', saying, 'It is not a very good cooker. It is fine.'

Her favourite activity while cooking was whisking.

A good hand whisk if you can get something fluffy for making a cake...It is a symbol of getting it ready [she imitated the motion] and spilt flour ... completely zone out ... and have a nice time to think about ... whatever. ... If I am going to do something right, separating egg whites from eggs yolk or something like that, it can all go horribly wrong in seconds, so I don't like that.

However, her love for an Aga was clear.

My ex-boyfriend had an Aga, and I liked how it did completely change how you cook. Because it is just hot all the time and you move in between different compartments. So making bread is completely, or making anything, would be different. We used to make lots of cake together. Anything like that is completely different in that oven and you get really used to it and it is in the middle of the house and it heats the house and it is just beautiful and functional.



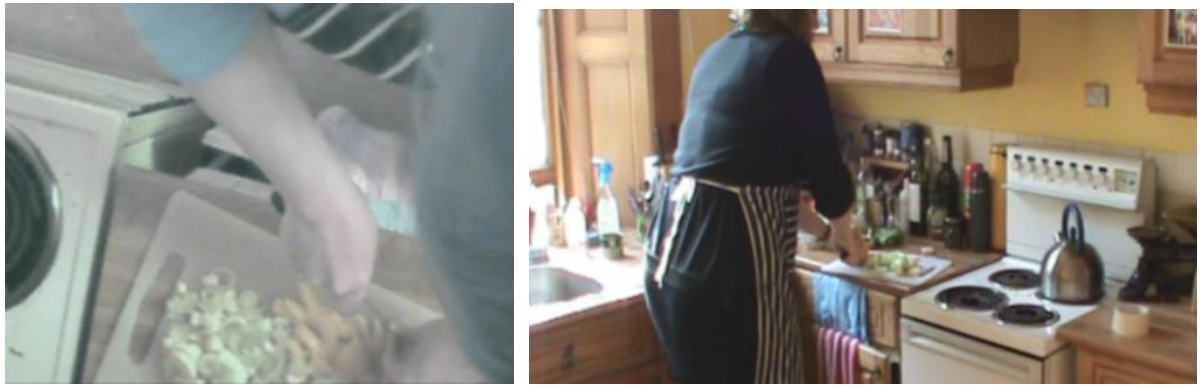
Figure 4-12: J's favourite items in her kitchen

She continued:

Oh, I love them ... it is a nice way to cook because you have got different spaces to be cooking on and all have got different temperatures. You have got to think about it differently. But also, because it is usually the houses I have been [in] have had an Aga in the middle of the kitchen, in the middle of the houses and everybody, if it is cold ... everyone is sitting around in the middle of the kitchen...even it enhances the sort of social side of the cooking. We even would not bother sitting on the hot place when the lid is down. But it is very different. You cannot do anything quickly on an Aga, which is good. It forces you to slow down. Slow lifestyle. It tends to depend on the lifestyle as well. People tend to be the slow cooking appreciators, I think. You know, shopping locally and not get ready things from a supermarket.

She learned cooking from her mother and friends but is not so keen on baking on her own, although she loved to help out in the process of baking either for a party occasion or for gifts. She was very experimental and adventurous and she would love to 'flit between different favourite meals'.

In response to the question of what she likes most about cooking, she replied, 'I like the whole process of it. I like how it brings people together'.



4-13: J while cooking her favourite meal

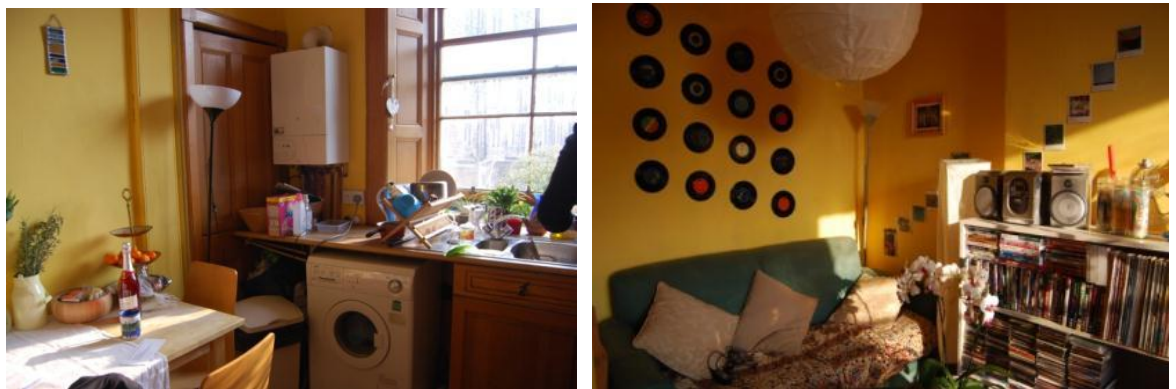


Figure 4-13: CD recorders, radios, books and flower pots could be observed in all the kitchens

She described the most playful moments in the kitchen below.

I guess when you think of it, you have your routines and your habits. I know my friend C, who is a really amazing Italian cook he has a really specific way of chopping; I cannot make dinner with him because he hates everything that I do. If I chop tomatoes, he hates it. He has a specific way of [doing] all that. I suppose it is his own way of *playing*. It is all in a certain shape and size. It does make it better, actually. For me, it is more work, why bother? I don't know, I guess [play is] having music on, having your routine.

For her, play is associated with a certain time, as it was in her childhood. She said cooking has replaced her playtime after school.

If you think in terms of what part of the day you dedicate to cooking. [I remember] when I was wee and play in a sense ... coming from the school, you get your clothes off [and start to play]... we continue all that when we get older.

In reply, I questioned whether she sees her childhood in the process of cooking, and she replied:

Yes, definitely, because I used to pretend to cook when I was little and making things for people. For me, it [cooking] is not very serious. I don't like setting down and planning your meal very carefully.



Figure 4-14: The informant and I in front of the camera in session one, cooking her favourite meal.



Figure 4-15: The informant and I in front of the camera in session 2, cooking the given recipe.

Informant number 2: R's cooking and her kitchen observation

R was 28 years old, a university graduate and employed full time. She lived with her boyfriend in a two-bedroom flat in the New Town, Edinburgh. They were able to purchase the flat recently and one of the reasons they chose this flat was its 'big kitchen'¹.

I always wanted a big kitchen and that comes from the feeling that food is not substances but social. The main criterion when we were buying this house was we can bring our friends over and all sit together. I don't want to be in a separate room.

The kitchen was approximately 20 square metres and fully furnished with a new gas cooker and refrigerator. A dining table was set on one side near a big window with a view of the backyard. The sink was located in another small space attached to the kitchen. There was also a small storage room just after the entrance, where she kept some boxes, food containers and the bin.



Figure 4-16: R's kitchen. The retro radio can be seen on the right.

¹ Quotes can be found in Appendix III , interview with R, pp. 298- 302.



Figure 4-17: Slicing the potatoes



Figure 4-18: R's omelette was more colourful than the others as she added other ingredients



Figure 4-19: The drawer of different cooking gadgets



Figure 4-20: The Asian steam basket in R's kitchen

Most of the kitchen equipment was acquired by herself and her boyfriend or received as presents, including the cooker, refrigerator, kettle, toaster, radio and some pots and pans.

I moved with my boyfriend a year ago and the microwave, cooker, kettle and toaster are all his and he's got them because they were cheap. I don't think there is any thought behind that I've got this pan for my 21st birthday from my

grandma. My grandma is the person who got me into cooking. She is very much 'food is love'. You can't eat when you go to her house. You have to be prepared when you go there and make sure you have an empty stomach.

The knives are a present. ... I think when people know you are interested in food and cooking, you are quite likely to get anything.

A lot of what we got are actually presents. This [radio] is again a present from the boyfriend. He knows I really like those radios.

She was very interested in cooking, and took some cookery courses. She also ran a weblog on cookery and updated it with the recipes she found interesting and cooked during the week. I observed some cookery techniques during her cooking that I never saw before. For example, before chopping the ingredient on the board she put a clean kitchen towel underneath and to check the oil in the pan was hot enough she took her palm near the surface of the pan.

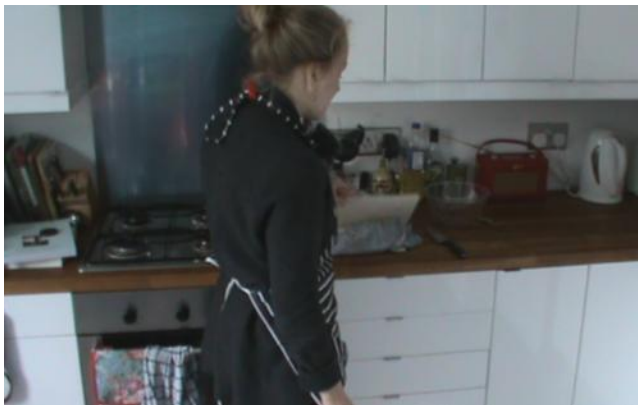


Figure 4-21: Putting a towel underneath the chopping board; a tip from a cooking course.

One of her favourite activities in the kitchen while cooking was listening to the radio, mostly BBC Radio 2 or Radio 4.



Figure 4-22: R's favourite radio and chopping board



Figure 4-23: Le Creuset pot gifted by her grandmother

She put her ultimate desire about the kitchen as follows:

I think the actual food itself makes me the happiest. I think having a farmers' market on my doorstep would be pretty special or, even better than that, would be having my own vegetable patch. I want to be able to ... you know ... walk outside my door and have something to eat ten minutes later. That's ultimately [what] I would like.

According to her, many of the gadgets we can find on the market would not be of use unless you had the skill to work with them and appreciate them.

I think in terms of products, the more I am getting into cooking, the more I am appreciating the little tools that can help out.

Her positive experience in relation to the kitchen appliances included functionality, memories, history and style.

This is my favourite knife ... It is not too big, not too small.

The things I like about the kitchen are often memories like this sugar pot. I got this in Berlin with J [the boyfriend] and we got it because it stops automatically. I think I like it because it is functional and looks nice. You don't need to use a spoon.

I like these (shows me a bottle). It is organic apple juice that comes in a glass jar. You can use the jar again. You can use it for flowers, keeping grains and things like that.



Figure 4-24: R's favourite Retro bottles and jars

She liked a retro style in the kitchen, saying:

... because it reminds me of maybe the time when people were more bothered by things ... like not eating battery chickens, where people tended to eat together more.

Her favourite chef was Jamie Oliver, although she joked about his 'bits and bobs', especially his *Flavour Shaker*, because she thought one can easily use a jam jar instead.

I think a jam jar would work just as well. Why do we have to buy a special dressing maker? You can buy so many things. I just don't know how necessary it is. I think it is a kind of consumerism. Just use the jam jar and save yourself a tenner.



Figure 4-25: Jamie Oliver Flavour Shaker



Figure 4-26: R's retro bin

Later, after the filming sessions, I found these statements on her weblog about her filming experiment. This shows how playfully she perceives cooking and kitchen practices:

The filming was for a friend of a friend so I was happy to help out but gees was it weird. I'm so used to just being an idiot in the kitchen, dancing around, singing badly, somehow I didn't feel comfortable doing that with someone I had just met for the first time. I wonder if that is how Delia feels when the film crew is in her home? Does she also dance to 80s tunes in her bare feet?

Informant number 3: M's cooking and her kitchen

M was 34, had A-level qualifications, and was working full time. She was single and shared the flat with two other girls. The flat was rented, in the central part of Edinburgh, near the Meadows. There was no living room but the kitchen had a sitting area as well. A big TV set and a big plant pot were put in the sitting area. The kitchen was about 30 square metres¹.



Figure 4-27: M's kitchen

¹ Quotes can be found in Appendix III , interview with M, pp. 302- 306.



Figure 4-28: A TV in the kitchen area

She said she loved to eat a homemade meal and tried to avoid any convenience food. She mostly cooked soups, pasta and meatballs.

When I grew up, we had home cooked meals every night. We never had junk food, proper home cooking so I kept that going. I have a takeaway hardly ever. I prefer cooking.

She liked experimenting with food, although it was sometimes difficult as some ingredients would be difficult to acquire.

I think I would love to be able to make really nice oriental food, making a really nice Thai meal but I think it is just the ingredients that scare me than the actual cooking. By the time you buy everything [it becomes easy].

Easy or difficult recipes, she said the best part 'is when it all comes together, and everything is cooked'. She admitted that she gained a lot of pleasure and joy from shopping for the meals she cooked and possibly part of this enthusiasm was due to the sociability she looked for.

I like to go shopping for the food I am gonna make. Something easy and straightforward is good but I do like the end of it. ... when it all comes together, and everything is cooked. I hardly cook for myself. Usually I cook when I have got friends coming over, I enjoy the bit at the end of it.

She cooked for her friends occasionally and enjoyed having them over to have a meal together, which might even involve trying new recipes:

Em, sometimes [I try new recipes], it depends who is coming over.

Altogether, she could not see any differences between her style of cooking and her friends' styles and skills:

I think everybody is the same. Most of my friends, we all enjoy cooking and we, I know, all go to each other's house for a meal and it is always proper home-cooked.

However, as much as she loved cooking, she avoided buying cooking equipment and kitchen appliances. She was not interested in buying appliances for her communal kitchen as it was a rented flat and she generally believed there was a gadget attitude dominating people:

I think everything is about the gadget nowadays, isn't it? I saw a programme on TV the other day. There was this coffee machine, it costs £4000 or something, and it has all those buttons and everything on it. I just think, use the kettle, just use the kettle. That's fine.

Surrounded by the world of adverts of 'fancy and high-tech' appliances, regardless of how much they can offer convenience and ease, she was happy with just simple and ordinary things.

I think cooking is only easier if you can cook. I mean, you can have all the gadgets in the world; if you're gonna burn a tin of beans then you're a rubbish cook, aren't you? No, I don't think you can ... if you can't cook then you can't cook.

I think you just get out of it what you put in. If you enjoy cooking, and you can cook, then it's good fun.

Although she did not connect appliances with the skill and joy in the preparation of food, she admitted she would like to have some special appliances to have more homemade food. The ice-cream maker and bread machine were mentioned as the appliances she would prefer to have and without them she had not been convinced to try making ice-cream or bread so far because the hassle and complicated process of

making bread and ice-cream always prevented her from trying. Overall, in spite of all her enthusiasm for cooking, she found baking a challenge.

I think that would be quite nice. I've never tried to make bread before and I don't know if I could do that, but I could certainly try. I probably if I have had one of those bread machines, I would probably make my own bread but I don't have a bread machine so I am not gonna make it.

[Baking in the oven] seems a lot more hassle and more difficult, but I've seen people use these bread machines and it does seem like make the app (application) and then put [everything] in the bread machine, but I think if you put it in the oven, obviously, it takes a lot of time and probably is a bit more complicated.

The blender, kettle and grill were the devices she cherished most in her kitchen.

I make a lot of soups, so I use my blender and we are never far away from each other. When I am making my soups but it is really just my kettle for making my cups of tea. ...

I've got it [the grill] from my best friend when I left home. I suppose this is a symbolic thing [I cherished].



Figure 4-29: The kettle and the grill were mentioned as M's favourite items in the kitchen

Her preference for an Aga was very clear when she said, 'At work we have got an Aga ... you know ... to cook on one of them is brilliant. That's why I enjoy cooking ... rather than [cooking on] this [indicates the home cooker with hesitation].'

In response to what she thought about the functions of the Aga cooker, she said:

I dry my washing on it ... wet shoes get left beside the Aga. Once you've washed up pots and pans, you can then put on top of the Aga and then dry it. You can even sit on the top ... but for cooking, it's brilliant ... you can make something in the morning, you're making a spaghetti Bolognese. You can make your meatball sauce in the morning, put it in the oven and leave it over there for the entire day, so it is great. It is good for cooking, though... and it is also so warm. They are on all the time. So they warm you and the kitchen.

She also thought that having an Aga functioned as a sign of wealth.

I think definitely it is. If you've got an Aga, it is definitely a sign of being well off in business. ... you find an Aga in a big house, a big country kitchen. You probably never get a chance to come in to one of these flats and find an Aga. I think that probability will be very slim. I think they are definitely a sign of wealth [and] ... obviously worth every penny, I think.

I observed the poetry magnets on her refrigerator as one of the playful activities she was engaged in with friends. In addition, the TV and radio were the fixed elements in her kitchen life.

I usually have the radio on when I am in the kitchen. I like to have the radio on all the time. ... [mostly] Radio 1 and then, once I am sitting at the table to have my meal, then I put the radio off and put the TV on. I like to have that background.



Figure 4-30: M in her kitchen. On the right, the CD player and poetry magnets can be observed on the refrigerator



Figure 4-31: The informant and I in front of the camera

Informant number 4: G's cooking and her kitchen

G was 25, with an undergraduate degree, single and shared a rented flat with two young men. The flat was in the central part of Edinburgh, near the Meadows. The kitchen was relatively small, approximately 6 square metres, and filled with packages of food and shabby-looking appliances. The kitchen was furnished with basic things, such as an electric hob, a refrigerator, sink, washing machine, toaster and kettle. A large window looked out onto the street. To get into the kitchen, I passed the living room, which was furnished with a dining table, a few chairs, a big sofa and a coffee table¹.

Like the other informants, she preferred homemade meals and tried to avoid ready-made meals. So she cooked every day as she believed 'there is no choice'. She cooked mostly pasta, chicken and chilli-con-carne.

The only thing is all the knives in this house are so terrible. We don't have really a sharp knife. That would be one thing, maybe for Christmas I'll ask for knives. It is not nice to gift someone, you know... like ... It is my grandma [who is always] asking me what I want.

She had other opinions about giving gifts which showed another side of contemporary gift giving; she was concerned that gifting kitchen appliances is an issue as some people (women, mostly) would interpret it as though it is their job to do the household chores and that they have to do it perfectly.

I am always concerned with things like that, no matter how useful it would be or how great it would be, if you give a woman a kitchen gadget that she is going to take it as offence, you know, like, 'what are you saying, I need a kitchen gadget'. Especially for someone like my mum, she would say, 'you are buying me this kitchen stuff for my birthday, come on!'. You know, she wants perfumes or something. So I wouldn't necessarily buy [a kitchen appliance as a gift]; may be [I would do it] for my sister or my dad.

¹ Quotes can be found in Appendix III, interview with G, pp. 307- 319.

She did not cook for her friends much and found it much easier to go to a pub and drink or use takeaways in such social gatherings. An important part of her social life was talking to someone, flatmates or online friends, while cooking in the kitchen. If no one was around to talk to, then she would ‘put some music on and ... just stand and listen to some music or have the news on ... [her] computer, generally. But ... [she prefers] to have someone to talk to than stand with music’. She also mentioned that they have a kind of rota for cooking at the flat, which allows them to have homemade food every day.

She learned to cook from her parents and mainly from her father. She started helping with the cooking when she was very young as her parents both worked away from home, and through that practice she learned to cook. As she mentioned, in their home, they did not follow the traditional roles and as her mother earned more money than her father, he spent more time at home and cooked most of the time.

In the kitchen, there was no room to have a microwave and she said they were quite used to not having one. The only thing she missed was making popcorn in the microwave.



Figure 4-32: Reading and checking the given recipe several times



Figure 4-33: Using a potato slicer by G



Figure 4-34: G's shared kitchen

Informant number 5: H's cooking and her kitchen

H was 35, single and shared the flat with another girl. H had a full-time job and occasionally visited her parents at the weekends. She did not enjoy cooking as much as baking. She believed she was not a 'food snob' and by that, she meant she did not mind eating tinned and frozen food, and in order to improve the quality of them, she mixed them with fresh food¹.

She said when she was a child, in comparison to other families she knew, her parents did not have many kitchen tools and that they had just basic things, such as pots and pans. By that she meant they did not have, for example, a food processor, electric whisk or blender. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that H has not spent much time and money on kitchen appliances and is just happy to use basic devices, like 'pots, pans and spoons'.

Despite a lack of such devices, her family used to bake cakes in the traditional way. Baking at home has had such an influence on her that even now she prefers baking to cooking.

... baking, I love it, because when I bake cakes I can watch them rise in the oven and I feel a sense of accomplishment. I enjoy the social aspect of baking because people can enjoy it too, whereas cooking, I find I always get myself in a tizz if I have guests and things aren't ready in time. ... I feel pressured and I am much more able to bake a cake a night before and have it ready in the fridge iced for the next day. I think it's just not so much pressure. ... [Whereas] cooking, for me, is always a serious business of having to get food ready.

However, the most fun for her was the kitchen as a social place:

I would say I had more fun with the baking side of things. Licking the bowl and the cake mixture and I don't mind washing up, stacking the dishwasher...erm...When it comes to actually enjoying being in the kitchen, I see it generally as a means to an end. And I like the kitchen socially because

¹ Quotes can be found at Appendix III , interview with H, pp. 319- 322.

you can have lots of people in to have a good chat so that I guess that's play in itself; to have the social aspect. I've noticed in the flat I am in as well, we have a big lounge with a big dining room table. It's beautiful but I always tend to have friends congregate in the kitchen. ... [It] is the best place to have a party; it is an unsaid rule.

The other aspect of her social experience in the kitchen derived from the interaction she had with her flatmate. The flatmate was interested in cooking and offered to help H when she had friends over. She said as much as she appreciated this help, she did not feel she needed this help when she was baking and she was quite independent in that.

Although she did not consider herself a good cook or interested in cooking, she cooks a variety of food: chicken and rice, salmon and potato, different kinds of casserole and very rarely just opens a tin of chilli-con-carne. She liked Chinese food and stir-fries but she did not know how to cook them at home. She said that in her thirties, she cared more about the food she ate and tried to have a healthier diet - more rice than chips, more vegetable and fruits than sweets.

Aside from her flatmate who was a good cook, she mentioned her cousin who was good at baking. He was an accountant by profession but he loved baking. Baking for him is a way to relax and is a source of enjoyment. He made his brother's wedding cake. He was also interested in kitchen appliances and, to her, 'he is a gadget guy'. He had many 'quirky' things in his kitchen for making cakes and muffins and he used them often. She also mentioned that his kitchen was very 'retro'.

Of the TV cooking programmes, she only watches *Saturday Kitchen*, mostly because they had a programme on Tuscany which she loves. However, she mentioned she did not watch TV generally and cooking programmes, for her, is like 'watching paint drying'.

Analysing data and a discussion of the ethnographic studies

In pursuit of observing different features of play in kitchen practices, my informants each demonstrated a distinct, personal approach. In this section, I will discuss their individual positions as well as exploring the extent to which I found their approaches not necessarily based on functional agendas but rather extending beyond that. The behaviours noted in the fieldwork fall within four main categories: food, individuals, kitchen appliances and the kitchen. I will demonstrate that the participants in the focus groups and the case studies illustrate the transformation of kitchen activities from serious and functional to playful and frivolous, ranging from household chores to relaxing and pleasant experiences. I will also argue that this complexity and combination of function and play is a postmodern approach to the notions of the kitchen and the cook.

Diagram 4-2 defines the kitchen interactions in regard to the four different categories extracted from my observation and interviews. Individuals, when asked about food, opened up a discussion on identity, skills, interests and abilities. Their relationship to appliances highlighted the concept of immersion, consumerism and trends, and the kitchen represents themes and issues relating to lifestyle, social roles, and communication.

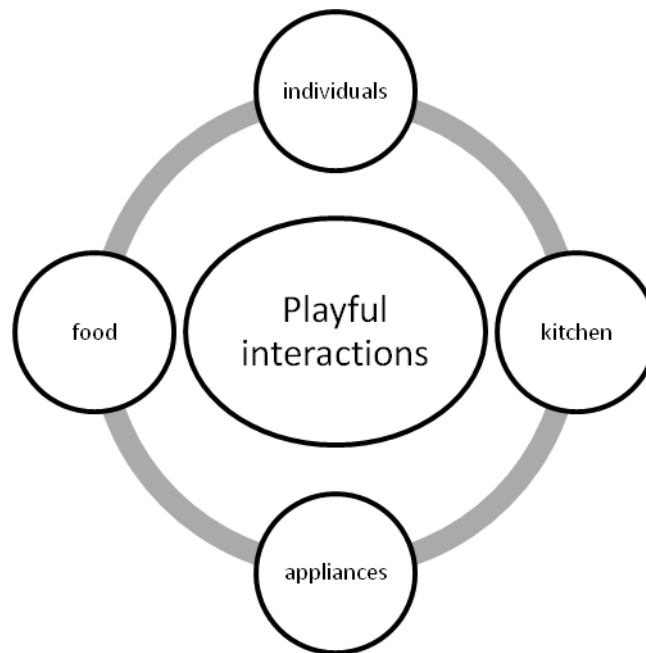


Diagram 4-2: The main four categories deal with playful interactions extracted from my observation and interviews

Researchers from a variety of disciplines over the past decade have begun to comment on the shift from function to fun within the context of the kitchen. Frances Short, for example, notes in her book, *Kitchen secrets: the meaning of cooking in everyday life*, that food is becoming more commoditised for the wealthier parts of the world, and is potentially frivolous rather than functional (Short, 2006, p.1). Food and health researchers, Martin Caraher, Tim Lang, and Paul Dixon, reported in 2000 that ‘the focus of cooking has changed from preparing everyday basic dishes to cooking for entertainment’(Caraher et al., 2000). In line with these concerns, I argue that the case studies on younger women emphasise complex relationships of the individualistic experiences related to food, cooking and eating and show that these experiences are not restricted to functional purposes as a means to an end but are also affiliated to fun and playfulness.

My focus in this part was mainly on the younger generation, aged 25 to 35, single or with a partner. As such, it does not include any family activity, such as a family lunch or dinner, and family roles in the home. Women in this research are studied as

individuals whose priority was to feed themselves in the first place rather than being involved in feeding responsibilities and influenced by family expectations.

Despite the differences I observed among the informants, they all shared one important thing - a genuine enthusiasm for cooking and eating home-made food or baking, a quality which I could hardly detect among the older generation in the focus group discussions. It was completely in contrast with what one can observe from their older counterparts, for whom cooking was about the family and the fulfilment of social roles, 'the mother, the homemaker'. In both age groups, 'self' was defined; one in relation to others and the other in relation to herself.

With different styles of cooking, backgrounds, interests, skills, assets and appliances, these young women positively insisted on cooking their own food, and relied less on convenience or manufactured processed food. This positivism was clear from different statements and behaviours observed in their kitchens and as such, it encourages my view that kitchen practices contribute to a state of feeling that I call enthusiasm for cooking homemade food. It is a new stage for a group of the younger generation who are ready to embrace new approaches to and interpretations of the kitchen, eating, cooking and using tools. The cooking enthusiasm I depicted has different features from very individual levels to more social ones. As is shown in Diagram 4-3, cooking enthusiasm here forms around different elements such as defining the self, using recipes, the fantasy of locally farmed food, socialising, curiosity about others, using or playing with tools.

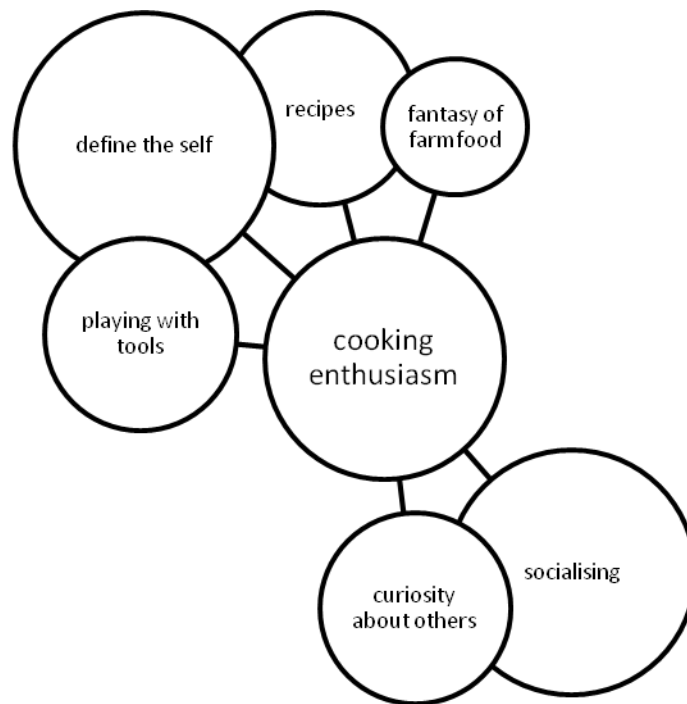


Diagram 4-3: Different aspects of enthusiasm in cooking drawn from my fieldwork

Food as the expression of identity

The first motivation for my young informants was to achieve a healthier lifestyle, which demonstrated a common self-oriented motivation for cooking within this age group. This was clear from the informants' statements such as: 'convenience food is not good for you' (G, Appendix III), 'I love good food' (R, Appendix III), 'I do really enjoy thinking about fitness, it seems to be a good excuse to think about it [cooking] a lot' (R, Appendix III), 'I think the way I was brought up is to eat well, and now I am in my thirties, I guess I spend more time thinking about being healthy, whereas, when I was in 20, I ate more chips. Now, I eat more rice [which involves cooking]' (H, Appendix III), 'my parents have been vegetarian too and my mum raised us in a way that we never had burgers or other processed food that is common' (J, Appendix III), or 'I enjoy cooking. Because of my job, I cook a lot of homemade meals' (H, Appendix III).

According to my observations and interviews, there are three main reasons my informants are interested in cooking homemade food: the first is the aim of having a

healthier lifestyle; the second is to express themselves through what they eat, how they cook and how they eat; and the third is based on a need to socialise and connect to people (Diagram 4-4).

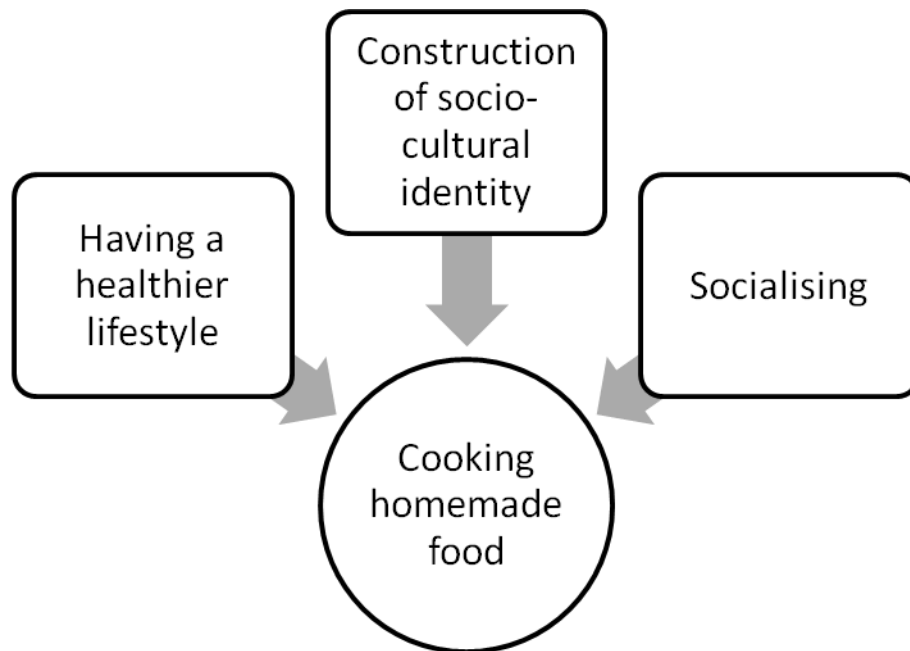


Diagram 4-4: Three main reasons that the informants were interested in homemade food

The first motivation for cooking homemade food is imposed by the individual herself, and it is about being sensitive to the consequence of bad eating habits. On another level, here, food, cooking and kitchen practices are activities directly connected to one's identity and define the self. As believed by many researchers in history, anthropology and cultural studies, food has been always an identity maker (Caplan, 1997; Scholliers, 2001; Short, 2006). It has signified religious identity, national identity or even political affiliation, for example, being conservative or liberal (Short, 2006, p.15). 'Tell me what you eat: I will tell you what you are,' wrote Brillat-Savarin, famously, showing how the correlation between food and identity began centuries ago. 'You are what you eat' (Willetts, 1997) still expresses that the food we eat reflects 'what we believe and what we value' (Short, 2006, p.15).

The following statements extracted from interviews demonstrate how food can define someone: 'I am not a food-snob', 'I am a vegetarian', 'He is a gadget guy in

the kitchen', 'I love to buy things from the farmers' market', 'I never eat junk food', and 'My cookery weblog is a way to express my passion for good food'.

The division of two eating patterns of 'good food' as opposed to 'junk food' or 'fast food' was clear from these statements. This division was acknowledged in a research project on the eating patterns of Canadian students in 1993. The students associated good food with family meals and a domestic setting, and junk food with having fun and spending time with friends free from parents' pressure (Caplan, 1997, p.6). In contrast with these findings, for my informants (with the exception of one case), the fun and quality time spent with friends have been intertwined with homemade meals and cooking. This can be a result of age, as is apparent from the statement from one of the informants who mentioned the change of eating pattern by age, or a change of habits associated with university and post-university life. This situation, according to Meilke, does not happen by chance, but has a psychological reason behind it: 'The more globalised the world becomes with people jetting across it every day, and the more abstract the connections in their lives become, the more they yearn to anchor themselves emotionally, to make certain of their roots' (Mielke, 2004). Hence, food preparations demonstrate certain values for different groups of people that through them they can associate and define themselves. In my study, homemade food becomes a means to socialise and is interwoven with socio-cultural values of a certain group of society.

Baking is more fun than cooking

Baking and cooking were mentioned as the two skills associated with the preparation of food in the kitchen. However, cooking is preferable to baking according to two of the interviewees, mainly because to prepare something edible, one does not necessarily need any instruction and the dish is often more adaptable, which can make it a creative process. Baking, on the other hand, such as baking bread, or making pastry or a cake, requires accurate measurement tools, special ingredients and detailed instructions.

Cooking is an essential part of everyday kitchen practices at home, while baking is seen as desirable and not necessary. As a result, baking is more of a leisure activity,

usually it can be done in advance, in a certain amount of time and is an action of choice. For the informants, baking also had a strong connection with special events and ceremonies in the family and community. Birthday cakes are inherently associated with the joy and happiness of family gatherings. Christmas and Easter also are, traditionally, the times which involve baking cookies, cakes and biscuits.

Across the UK, there appears to be a rise of interest in baking; Mintel Group Ltd., a leading London-based analysis company for food and drink research in the UK, reported in November 2012 that home baking increased by 59% between 2007 and 2012. Based on this report, nine in ten British women are keen on baking (Mintel, 2012). Emma Clifford, the Senior Food Analyst at Mintel, stated:

Home baking is one of the few food categories to have flourished during the recession, in fact the onset of the economic downturn actually helped to kick start the revival in home baking. With real incomes under strain, Britain has become more of a stay-at-home nation and consumers have sought low-cost activities such as baking to save money. (Mintel, 2012)

However, she adds it is not just for economical reasons that many British have embraced baking. TV programmes such as *The Great British Bake Off* have played a great role in spreading interest in home baking by presenting its enjoyment possibilities. On another level, such programmes are helping to increase men's interest in baking as well. Seven in ten (68%) men were found to be baking in 2012 and almost a quarter (22%) of all male bakers were baking more than they were a year ago. (Mintel, 2012, accessed on 23/1/2013)

In this report, enjoyment is mentioned as a factor which has led to the increase of home-baking activities among the British, but the quality of this enjoyment has not been discussed. In my observation and interviews, the source of this enjoyment can be explained as follows.

One person in the discussion group defined the playfulness of the kitchen in relation to the presence of children while baking. Other contributors such as J and H, from the ethnographic studies, enjoyed baking because they derived a sense of

accomplishment from the task and ‘complete zone out’ conditions. For J and H, the experience itself is important and makes it a subjective play or game.

This relaxing quality partly derives from the fact that neither J nor H feels the obligation to bake every day, and thus, baking remains a self-indulgent and leisurely exercise. One no longer has to bake from scratch every day, as ready-made pastries, pre-mixed bread and cake flours, and high quality savoury and sweet baked goods can be purchased at supermarkets and shops, thus freeing the individual from the burden of routine everyday baking. An endless variety of baking material and information, from baking books and websites to TV cookery programmes can make baking an exciting and experimental activity, rather than one of pure necessity. However, people have a tremendous variety of options when it comes to nourishment. If they do decide to bake, it suggests that there is a strong motivation for doing so, and motivations can include from, I would argue, being self-indulgent to impressing others, from enjoyment and fun to improving health and culinary skill and having a playful moment – these are the strong elements of that motivation.

For H, baking is fun and preferable, because, for her, it is a spare-time activity and she often bakes the night before parties and occasions, to leave herself time to correct any unexpected or bad results. This freedom and choice are in her favour, and make her feel secure, as opposed to a time when, for example, a meal must be ready by a certain time and does not afford any time for mistakes. Generally, cooking for guests was very stressful for her.

I also noticed that, for some, fantasy in the form of the baking equipment, such as cake tins in the shape of rabbits, is more acceptable than fantasy in the form of everyday cooking appliances. J, who criticised the function of some of Alessi’s products and was not keen in acquiring them, instead owned a number of ‘quirky’ baking tins.

Baking can be seen as too complex to make it desirable. Among my informants, G and M were not keen on baking, and found it difficult and complicated. It is understandable, especially if one has less experience and is less focused. Some

people may find baking challenging if they are distracted easily, which is not advantageous for a task requiring such care. The oven needs to be checked from time to time, as sometimes food bakes faster than the due time. As a result, even though it is done for fun and enjoyment, the unintended outcome or unpleasant feedback one receives each time can be disappointing and lessen the joy one expects to gain. Whilst for some, these failures may be viewed as a learning experience with opportunities to try again to improve, for other people, the next attempt at baking may be approached as a challenge requiring greater preparation and resolve; a self-assigned game or play which losing or winning leads to a new lesson and self-satisfaction.

Recipes

The playful behaviour towards kitchen practices is not limited to baking. What I observed is more about individuals who do not want to take matters too seriously. The behaviours towards the recipes would perfectly demonstrate this. Part of my observation includes comparing the difference between the cooking procedures employed by the participants while they were following my given recipe, to their procedures while cooking a meal they had chosen themselves. Unsurprisingly, I noticed that the informants felt more comfortable with their chosen recipe. In the case of the Spanish omelette, which was my given recipe, participants were always worried about the result. However, in J and R's cases, the participants felt free to give the omelette a 'personal touch' (Kaufmann, 2010, p.194), and prepared it with some changes to the ingredients. J made her omelette with some garlic and olives added on the top and R added some courgette and cheese. This shows that not everybody follows the given recipes and that people like to be creative and to be allowed to change recipes to their taste and preference.

J and R, in comparison to other informants, were more intuitive, confident and experimental in terms of cooking and this demonstrates that their reaction towards the given recipe matched their other behaviours in the kitchen, such as their openness to trying new recipes and to international meals. In my first visit to J, she made one of her favourite meals, a Vietnamese recipe introduced by her friend who had recently returned from visiting Vietnam. She said she has also tried many curry

recipes. Similarly, in R's cupboards, she pointed out a small tagine and Chinese dumpling cooker basket that she said she used occasionally. Interestingly, J and R were the only people among the informants whom I noticed had cookery books on their kitchen shelves.

To follow or not to follow recipes was an issue discussed in all the interviews, and it became clear that following a recipe is not always favoured by the informants. I would argue that this issue is more complicated than it appears. Recipes are created to support cooks and make things easier, not more difficult. According to Jean-Claude Kaufmann, the French sociologist who wrote a book on *The Meaning of Cooking*, recipes 'are precious because they tell us exactly what to do' (Kaufmann, 2010, p.195), however, for my informants, recipes were seen as restrictions to their freedom in the kitchen and a restraint to imagination and creativity.

R uses cookery books to try new recipes and shares the experience on her weblog, while J uses recipes on special occasions when she might be judged by others, which means she associates it with more pressure and stress. The other three said they mostly cook meals they already know and very rarely try new recipes from books, preferring to use recipes they encounter or found on the Internet, TV or YouTube, or those recommended by a friend. This escape from using the recipes in a traditional way, for any reason, shows a change of attitudes from a structural usage of recipes to a more improvised and random approach to cooking.

In the interviews, I asked 'Do you usually try new recipes?' and the responses were:

M: Em, sometimes, it depends who is coming over ...
Recipes confuse me.

H: ... I am much more slapdash with recipes and make my own up ... No, and I don't think I ever will be someone who religiously follows a recipe I wish I was but [laughs] I don't have the attention.

J: I am like my mum. Quite similar, [although] we tease her for not sticking to recipes and things might go sometimes wrong but she doesn't follow any rules. (Ethnographic interviews, Appendix III)

Surprisingly, no one mentioned recipe boxes or its new electronic equivalent, ‘food applications’. They are useful devices to help people to keep their favourite recipes, either written on a piece of paper, on the notebook provided inside the box, cut from webpages or shared on people’s weblogs. In comparison to cookery books, recipe boxes and digital applications are more personal and expandable, shared by friends and others, for example, and can be used as aide-memoires. In the process of cooking, cookery books provide restricting roles while recipe boxes or their digital equivalents are user-friendly, allow more control over personal choices and improvisation.

In addition, mobile applications and online recipes make baking and cooking guidelines even more accessible. Cookery recipes on new media have been increasingly used, as is evidenced by national surveys. Mintel reports that more people now refer to the Internet to find a baking recipe than those who rely on cookbooks (Mintel, 2012). Vivianne Ihekweazu, Senior Food and Drink analyst at Mintel, notes:

While cookbooks have traditionally been the main source of information for baking recipes, consumers now have access to a wide range of sources when looking for inspiration or a specific recipe - and the internet and recipe blogs have become a vital part of this. The importance of the internet for recipes has been driven in part by TV cookery shows and the celebrity chef boom - recipes from the programmes are often available online immediately while books take longer to come out. Online recipes are more personal, free of charge and consumers can just print off the recipes they like. They are also now an important tool for supermarkets, equipment and ingredients manufacturers as well as cookbook authors and publishers, and have supported the revival in home baking around the recession. (Mintel, 2012)

Moreover, the rating of a recipe, people’s comments, some informal contents, hyperlinks and recommended websites and recipes on these webpages make them more useful and attractive than recipes in cookery books. In addition, converting measuring units and the availability of the ingredients in nearby shops can easily be checked online.

All in all, based on these arguments, using and accessing cookery and bakery recipes and instructions through the Internet and digital applications can be more personal and a means of social interactions and networking and provide more fun and enjoyment, through commenting, sharing, rating, following hyperlinks, comparing, and so on.

Social life and communicative aspects

‘Everybody ends up talking in the kitchen.’ This is a statement I have heard many times, not just in my interviews but on other occasions, and from everyday talks with people and friends in Edinburgh. This attitude suggests that the line between private and social space in the kitchen is often hard to define.

As previously highlighted, the focus of this research has been on individuals and not families, but in all the interviews, the activity of cooking for friends and eating with family and friends has been raised. Dining tables are thought of as a vehicle to construct bonds between friends and within the family (Kaufmann, 2010, p. 151) and these family aspects of cooking have been discussed in the work of anthropologists, historians (Fernandez-Armesto, 2002), and sociologists (Short, 2006; Kaufmann, 2010; Beardsworth and Keil, 1997). The kitchen has been connected to family meals and family socialising (Short, 2006; Kaufmann, 2010). For example, in G’s case, her mother asks what she would like to eat next time she visits home, showing her mother’s concerns to cook something special for G when she visits. The family aspect of the kitchen in the case of J and her sister can be illustrated in their baking experiences and their dining-kitchen complete with piano and shelves of books. For M, who regularly has friends over for homemade meals, the kitchen is part of her social life, and R’s decision to choose a house with a bigger kitchen was to accommodate friends around the kitchen table.

Yet despite this evidence, the social aspects of food preparation for home-made meals are in danger in the eyes of some scholars who believe ‘food is being de-socialised’ (Fernandez-Armesto, 2001 in Short, 2006, p.6). Fast-food restaurants, takeaways, convenience foods, microwaves and ready meals are all blamed and

considered to be a threat to cooking skills. This, therefore, occurs at the cost of losing family, social, and communal rituals of eating.

However, in my research, even for G who does not have time to cook for friends, it does not stop her from inviting them to come over and share food. She usually opts for home-delivered pizza to share with her friends. In this case, takeaways play a significant role in keeping G's interests and to help her to bond with friends.

The kitchen is a social place especially for those informants who shared a flat. The kitchen for them was a place to chat, share, exchange and communicate. Even kitchen appliances can have a role in this communication. Any change in the arrangement, items that are not put aside and left on the worktop, new items and so forth can transmit meanings to individuals. As such, it is not just the actual behaviour or conversation that defines relationships, but objects also play a significant role.

M (who shared a flat with two other girls) has acquired many kitchen appliances and generously shared them with her flatmates. She said when she ultimately moves out of the flat, many items will go with her and she wondered if any of her flatmates will notice as she felt the flatmates never responded to this generosity in a way she deserved.

It is impossible to separate the social aspect of cooking and eating in any culture. Michel Roux, Jr., the French-English two-star Michelin chef, believes 'the perfect dining experience is made up of three key elements, the company, the food and the drink' (Roux Jr, 2013). Aicher, who is also famous for his book in 1982, *The Kitchen is for Cooking*, acknowledges this inseparable social function of the kitchen and how eating and cooking can be more of a pleasure if others join the cooking process (Aicher, 1982 quoted in Meilke, 2004, p.11), for both men and women.

Men's cooking and baking

Historically, gender identity has been linked to kitchen activities. In all five interviews, specific men were named as the examples of good male cooks without me directing the conversation toward the role of men in the kitchen. The men mentioned were either celebrities, family or friends. H's cousin, J's friend, R's

boyfriend and G's old flatmate and her father were exemplars of men who passionately followed gastronomy and culinary practices. The favourite chefs mentioned were Jamie Oliver and Gordon Ramsey.

Whilst it is apparent that a number of male chefs mentioned were at a celebrity level, it was also evident that men known to the participants often feature within families and groups of friends as being good cooks. This highlights how the kitchen has begun to be de-gendered over the last few decades and how kitchen practices have been affected as a result of these socio-cultural changes (Chapman and Hockey, 1999). This change of attitude was observed and mentioned in the discussion groups by the older women in the group discussions. For example, for M who was in her 70s, it was very surprising to see her son, who had never done any housework when he lived with her, now after marriage, he cooks and even invites friends to dine with them.

From the point of view of professional cooking, it is perhaps not surprising that more men are among the top ten best chefs in Britain, and to have only a few female chefs on the list every year. Gwen Hyman, the American author of cookery books, believes it is partly connected to men's tradition of having the 'producing role in societies' and avoiding the amateurism that usually women represent in cooking at home (Hyman, 2008) and domestic food production. However, on a celebrity level, it is not just the male chefs who are making a name for themselves. Celebrity TV personality, Nigella Lawson, who does not give herself any credit for being a chef or even a cook, but, enters the households of not only the British and other English speakers with her broadcasts, is also being dubbed in different languages and viewed around the world. She claims, 'I am not a chef. I am not even a trained or professional cook. My qualification is as an eater. I cook what I want to eat. ...I have a job ... as an ordinary working journalist' (Lawson, 2008).

According to research in 2000, the influence of TV and celebrity chefs on public attitudes does not expand more than as an entertainer (Caraher, et al. 2000). Food and health researchers, Martin Caraher, Tim Lang and Paul Dixon, in 2000 ran a national survey on the influence of TV and celebrity chefs on public attitudes and behaviour

among the English public and demonstrated that ‘TV cookery programmes rate low as an influence on cooking behaviour. The viewers of TV cookery programmes perceive them as entertainment’ and ‘the celebrity chef is seen as an entertainer and not necessarily someone who will provide reliable advice on cooking and health matters’ (Caraher et al., 2000). On a similar thread, H, one of the informants, equated the entertainment value of TV cookery programmes to ‘watching paint dry’.

I believe the influence of male celebrity chefs since 2000 has been inspirational for men, and in the light of more recent findings, the change of attitudes can be traced. According to a report by the Mintel Group in 2012,

Male celebrity bakers, such as Jamie Oliver, the *Fabulous Baker Brothers* and the presenter of *The Great British Bake Off*, Paul Hollywood, are helping to raise the profile of baking among men. As a result, men are becoming more engaged in baking. However, men bake less than women, and bread is the only baked good that male bakers are more likely than women to make. (Mintel, 2012)

Whilst older reports represented men as equally interested, and adventurous as women in their cooking or trying new recipes, they demonstrated that men cook less or never cook (Mintel, 2004). In recent reports, the influence of TV cookery programmes indicates the increase of men’s interest in baking and statistics show 68% of men were found to be baking in 2012. (Mintel, 2012, accessed on 23/1/2013)

Kaufmann distinguishes three types of men in regard to cooking skills. The first group are the ‘men who expect to be waited on’, the second are ‘the helpers’ and the third are ‘modern heroes’ who cook. Men’s role in most kitchens, according to Kaufmann, is ‘the helper’ and they blame themselves for not doing more (Kaufmann, 2004). However, based on recent reports, a more active role for men in the kitchen can be expected.

As previously noted, the informants all agreed that Jamie Oliver is an influential figure among celebrity chefs. I think for a number of reasons, he is a replacement for Delia Smith who was the role model for a generation in the 1970s and 1980s. The ‘Jamie Oliver effect’ as opposed to the ‘Delia effect’ (Rohrer, 2009) has had a multi-

layered influence on society from education and business to entertainment and communication (Wallop, 2011). Oliver's food campaigns, websites, his relaxed and easy-going attitudes towards cooking make him so popular that it is difficult to ignore his social influence on culinary practices today in Britain.

I think the increase in men's baking and cooking along with the focus given to celebrity chefs in magazines, books and on TV shows has helped to establish the fun and creative side of baking and cooking. It is believed by cultural researchers, such as Lise Shapiro Sanders, that even those who call themselves 'amateur chefs' (referring to people such as Nigella Lawson) have changed the mundane and hard work of the kitchen by 'infusing them with a sense of playfulness, sexiness and pleasure' (Sanders, 2009).

Skills and training

Contemporary studies on food and cooking focus on the loss of cooking skills, generally (Ritzer, 1995) and specifically among the British (Caraher et al., 2000), in comparison to other European nations (Steel, 2011). 'The death of cooking', an article by Matthew Fort, the food writer at *The Guardian*, in 2003, pessimistically described all the social emphasis on food and cookery, such as TV programmes, cookery books, the rise of farmers' markets, and the diversity of foods available in supermarkets as evidence of the manifestation of 'the death throes of British domestic cooking' (Fort, 2003).

The Good Food Foundation (1998) found among a sample of young people that 36% selected sandwiches as their cookery skill; 31% said making toast; 20% opening cereal boxes; 19% cake mixes from a packet; 9% cooking eggs; 11% cooking chips and 7% cooking a pizza. (Caraher et al., 2000). A decade later, in 2007, Eating Habits reported that 50% of those under 24 admitted that they had no skills in the kitchen (Wrap, 2007). These statistics warned policymakers and social activists to think more about the future of culinary skills. At the moment, across the UK, many local and national projects have been developed to promote cooking skills and healthy eating. For example, 'Can Cook' in Liverpool (started in 2012), Urban Farming as a part of Dott 07, led by the programme director and leading character in

sustainable thinking, John Thackara (in 2007), Kiddy Cook (since 2005), the Foodies Festival, Jamie Oliver's Ministry of Food (since 2008) across the UK and his Food Revolution in the United States (since 2010) with the campaigns of Food Revolution Day in May every year across the world, all these events aim to advocate healthy cookery skills.

Similarly in Scotland, projects such as Blasda: Scotland's Local Food Feast (since 2012), school programmes developed by the Scottish Food and Drink Federation (since 1999), the governmental community project, Community Food and Health Scotland (since 1996), Culture Kitchen (since 2012) and the Taste of Edinburgh food festival (2011 and 2012), have attempted to encourage people, children and adults in different communities to cook and learn more about healthy food.

However, in comparison to other European nations, the result is still disappointing. Fort, for *The Guardian*, compared the British to the Italians in terms of food culture and explained how food culture is interwoven with Italian identity. Italians preserve this culture by talking about food all the time, having at least one home-cooked meal with the family each day, educating children about the good food practically, and thereby transferring their food culture to the next generation. This process for the British is in decline. Fort believes food culture's decline began during the Second World War when married women were required to replace men in more public jobs rather than expected to give up work and stay at home. As such, it seems that with less cultural and historical support than that of the Italians, extra effort is required if the British are to revive their food culture. He concluded that one way to achieve this revival is to stop looking on cooking, 'as a duty, but as an essential, and food, not as fuel, but as a pleasure' (Fort, 2003). For him, what is necessary is a change in attitude rather than assets.

In 2013, the eating aspects of the Italians and the British were again compared on the BBC News programme, *Why do the Italians live longer than us?*, reported by Fergus Walsh, the BBC medical correspondent. He argued that one reason Italians live longer than their British counterparts is likely due to the Mediterranean diet as opposed to the often nutritionally poor British diets. Walsh interviewed Stefania

Salmaso, the director of the National Centre for Epidemiology and Health Promotion in Rome, who said:

Since the 1960s there has been a big improvement in the Italian diet, with much more fresh fish and a wider variety of foods. Fresh vegetables and fruit are commonly available and we use a lot of olive oil in cooking, and less animal fats than is found in British dishes (Walsh, 2013).

This might be a one-dimensional argument about a complex issue, such as the eating habits of a nation, but it shows something clearly and that is that change is needed. Aggressively talking about and blaming the British food culture have been topics of criticism for more than two decades, however, there are few people who try to see the positive. Short sees the accessible diversity of food as a factor that leads to a more relaxed kitchen environment and the transition of the kitchen to a place for more entertainment and fun.

The sheer diversity of food available in Britain today offers great potential for consumers to create varied homemade meals. Italian and Indian ingredients, for example, are so common and available that one can easily forget they were not in our shopping baskets 30 years ago. Chinese and Thai meals are now among the favourite dishes in the UK. Mintel reported in 2007 that the market for Thai food increased by 44% from 2002. However, the ingredients of such cuisines are being used in home cooking, as consumers become more familiar with them. 'Positioning Thai and other emerging ethnic cuisines as a naturally light and healthy addition to the consumer's everyday repertoire will ensure that they become a staple rather than a takeaway substitute, and incorporating functional elements will keep the consumer engaged' (Mintel, 2007).

My observations revealed that my informants might not have enough confidence in their cookery skills, but they showed considerable enthusiasm for food culture. Indeed, the focus of cooking has changed from preparing everyday dishes from scratch, as it was for their mothers, to a form of entertainment. Only the woman who maintains a weblog had advanced skills in the kitchen, and attended cooking classes, but all claimed to be food-lovers who appreciate homemade meals and spent time

cooking. Interestingly, when I asked them to explain their cooking interests and style compared to their friends, they said that they mostly follow similar cooking styles and enjoy similar food.

The informants said they learned to cook from their parents, mostly from their mothers and grandmothers. Friends and flatmates were also mentioned as influential people on the style of cooking. It seems that mothers are the source of cookery training and as stated in a survey in 1999, ‘the importance of mothers seems to be above class differences’ (Caraher et al., 2000). The researchers of the survey reported that ‘cookbooks were more important for the higher social classes’ and ‘cooking classes at school were more important for lower social classes’ (Caraher et al., 2000).

Caraher and his colleagues highlighted two potential pressures, firstly, there is a danger that cooking skills will be lost by assuming cookery is a leisure activity in a postmodern framework, and secondly, the loss of fun, leisure and the aesthetic of cooking (Caraher et al., 2000) if there is too great a focus on health and skills.

Similarly, for those who do not acknowledge the training aspect of cookery TV programmes, and believe in a division between the training and entertaining aspects of such programmes, one can argue that in new approaches to education and training, this division is not acceptable, and play and entertainment are strongly advocated as key elements in education, being an inseparable part of the learning process (Else, 2009). One of the aims in the aforementioned national cookery community activities is to keep the fun elements in these projects, whether in the form of games, narratives, comedy, a self-journey, or other entertaining formats. In this way, it is expected that people, as much as they are entertained, could gain a reward from their accomplishment.

There was also evidence of the relationship between skills and the appliances the informants had in their kitchens. When renting flats, it is very common to find appliances left by previous tenants or provided by the landlord, such as items of cutlery, blunt knives, broken and shabby pots and pans, and cheap small kitchen appliances. However, each of my informants also had at least one or two items of

their own which they cherished. Some of them were acquired as gifts or were purchased for their specific intended functions. Especially in J's and R's kitchen, who were more interested in cooking and baking, I observed a series of professional kitchen gadgets. For example, R had an adjustable rolling pin by *Josef and Josef*, a pizza wheel and a variety of kitchen knives. She believed as she developed her culinary skills, she had more appreciation for new pragmatic kitchen appliances. She drew my attention to the details of a ladle by *Josef and Josef* where the scoop section did not touch the worktop. Similarly, J showed me a couple of cake tins which had been acquired by her sister who is living with her and who had baking interests and skills.



Figure 4-35: The adjustable rolling pin by Josef and Josef



Figure 4-36: The ladle from The Elevated range of kitchen utensils by Josef and Josef, the head is always raised off the work surface

The Aesthetics of Interaction with regard to cookers

The functionality and performance of an object is obviously a key element in eliciting joy and satisfaction. In my observations, I encountered a dichotomy in using gas and electric cookers. What is normally expected from a cooker is that it will provide controllable, safe heat in order to cook and prepare food. Cookers today are the result of centuries of development and technological progress. Since the first cooker was designed in the 18th century by the French architect, François de Cuvilliers (Kerr, 2013), they have evolved to provide more safety, convenience and

efficiency. Even the microwave, which, for a time after its invention was thought destined to replace the traditional-style cooker, has not prevented the development of cookers or reduced their importance in the kitchen. However, their functional performance can still be an issue in the kitchen. Cookers, either in the form of electrical hobs or gas stoves, are looked upon differently by users.

For G, who was brought up in England at a home with a kitchen which had a gas stove, having an electric cooker is her everyday nightmare in the kitchen. She said, ‘I hate these electric hobs. Since I moved to Edinburgh I’ve had electric stoves. It is a bit different ... my problem with this cooker is, it takes longer to cool down. ... you can’t control it at all’ (interview with G).

According to the readers’ responses to the question, ‘Gas or electric stoves? Which do you prefer and why?’, which was posed on the Home cooking web page by [Peggy Trowbridge](#) Filippone, the writer and food service industry professional, electric cookers are considered safe and clean to use and kinder to the environment, whereas gas cookers are seen as being easily manageable and economical (Trowbridge Filippone 2014). While a flame does not need any indicator to show the degree of heat and is more tangible, dealing with electricity is abstract and requires experience.

Using a gas cooker involves our senses completely if we are to fully engage. The colour of the flame, the smell, speed, heat and noise are all factors that make the gas cooker a more sensory engaging product in comparison to an electric cooker. While R kept her hand over the pan, to check the heat and see if the pan is hot enough to pour the eggs into it, she had learned how to use her senses well (here the sense of touch) to utilise products efficiently. However, as previously argued, the way people feel about which cooker they prefer to use is very much connected to their past experiences and the skills they have gained throughout their life.

5 Where play fits in

This chapter discusses the extent to which playfulness fits into product designs. I begin with the results of the fieldwork, then, the emergence of LAoI as a complementary framework for AoI and at the end of the chapter, I develop four scenarios for design students to demonstrate how the LAoI can be a powerful framework to explain and solve some of the contemporary problems in different communities.

5.1 Affording play

Recalling the taxonomy introduced at the end of Chapter 2 (p.83), and its four categories, visual, functional, transcendent and affording play, I expected to observe a variety of those categorised artefacts in the kitchens of the informants, to examine their experience with such products or at least come across them in the interviews. However, of the four categories, I can only discuss my observations according to the fourth category - affording play- and expand it to another level that I named it ‘a replay of the past by using retro style’ (Table 5-1).

In this section, via the terms ‘affording play’ and ‘replay’, I intend to consider the essential qualities of particular appliances. Affording play, as mentioned earlier, is where an object is designed for functional purposes but in interactions with users, such a product can afford some degree or quality of playfulness. It means that based on who the user is a product can be approached and used in a playful way, regardless of its physical appearance, visual properties and actual function.

Scales and measuring tools in the kitchen present a range of playful thoughts and perspectives in this respect. When observing informants’ behaviour as they prepared meals, it was clear that the amount of ingredients required was considered important but specific instructions relating to weights and measures can be easily ignored by the cook.

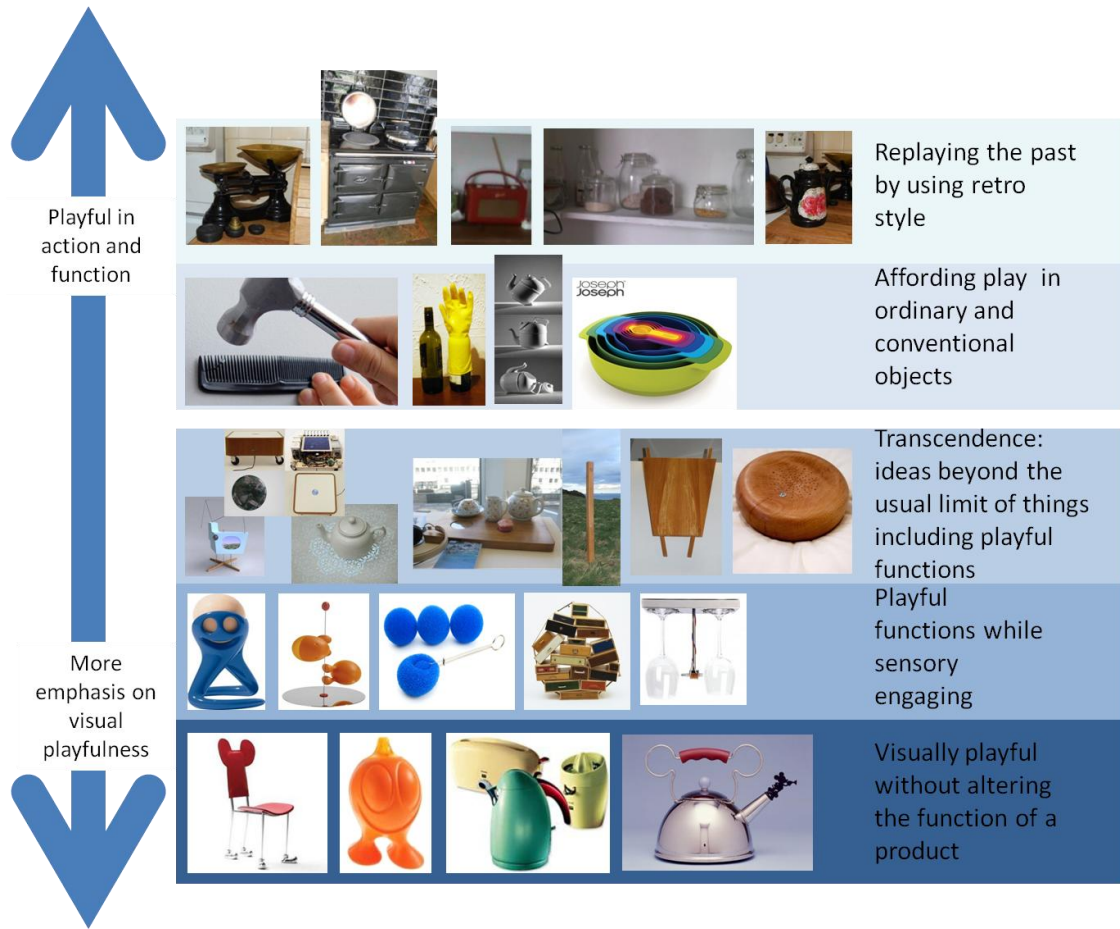


Table 5-1: Taxonomy of playful products after fieldworks

I noticed that people mostly rely on their intuition and perception rather than the use of measuring tools. The exception to this approach is baking. Accuracy in baking is essential and it is for this reason that, for some people, including J, M and G, baking seems to be out of the question. In addition, as much as the act of measuring can be a serious and vital job when following baking recipes, I noticed even the act of measuring can provide a reason for play. The scales, for example, especially in the case of J when she was trying to measure the potatoes on the antique iron-cast scales, illustrated how she was involved in a playful engagement. Firstly, because she preferred this type of scales rather than digital or mechanical ones, which are more commonly used in homes and available in shops. Her choice represents a playful behaviour. Then, while using it, she obviously played with the weights in order to contemplate which two or three would give her the desirable amount. She was easily

distracted from the whole job and immersed herself in the measuring activity. It was clear that she had not used them very often, she needed to think more about the job, and she did not have much skill in using this simple machine. Nevertheless, it was also apparent that she enjoyed this challenge, and did not mind playing with this toy in the kitchen for a while.

In *The Independent*, a similar model stands second best among the 10 best kitchen scales, promoting the simplicity of an older time. The article in that newspaper introduces this product by saying: ‘Get back to basics with the kind of scales your grandmother would have used. With an acacia wood stand, these black cast-iron scales are as traditional as you can get’ (Hilpern, 2013). J owned one of them and mentioned that these scales remind her of her grandmother.



Figure 5-1: The kitchen craft cast-iron scales by Debenhams promoted in *The Independent*



Figure 5-2: J's cast-iron scales

On another level, but with a lesser degree of engagement, it was R's vivid multi-coloured measuring cups with their practical storage function that attracted my attention (Figure 5-3). These measuring cups, stacked one inside the other, suggested a playful system of storage in the kitchen. It is a clear reminder of stack up toy-boxes for toddlers. The cups could easily become entertaining toys for children without making the mother worried about health and safety issues. However, in the context of the kitchen, for adults, the practicality of storing them is fun, engaging and practical. The variety of colours in these cups brightens the dull side of the measuring activity in the kitchen. The idea of colours is not new in kitchen appliances and appeared in the 1920s (Alexander, 2004) as a result of technological development and market competitions. Since then, colours have been used to emphasise the bright side of serious kitchen chores and as a distraction from the serious job of cooking. Nevertheless, here each colour is employed to play a practical role and it is associated with different measures. The colour, therefore, can make the size easily recognizable after using them for a while.



Figure 5-3: Measuring cups by Joseph and Joseph



Figure 5-4: Using the scale by J

5.2 Replay

Any item that has a retro appearance and function demonstrates that the initial designated form, material and design elements combine to make an artefact that can be used again and it can be thought of differently, which provides room for creativity and playfulness. In reviewing the history of British design, it becomes apparent that for the British, benefiting from the past is not a new concept. Britain has a long history of conservation, resilience, and resistance to change (Buckley, 2007) and I believe British designers are the first who engaged with this playful property of objects.

The idea of retro is usually associated with terms such as ‘old-fashioned’, ‘classic’, ‘timeless’, ‘a backwards glance at the past’ (Guffey, 2006) but I interpret this reusing or recalling of the past as ‘replay’ and for me, the Aga cooker and cast-iron scales are examples in my observation that best demonstrate aspects of the LAoI that I propose. The aesthetics of the retro style was raised several times in my interviews. One reason for such fascination can be nostalgia for the past and the values that were lost during the post-war era. The baby-boom generation of post-war Britain may not appreciate the aesthetics of that time as much as their American consumer-driven counterparts and perhaps it is time to take another look at design of that era. It is also apparent from the informants’ statements that retro is desirable for many reasons. G said it reminded her of the time when people bothered about things and people tended to eat together. Subsequently, retro for J was a reminder of her childhood and her desirable grandmother’s kitchen, hence why she bought her own set of scales from a farmhouse yard sale without thinking twice. Retro, here, is about a tendency to favour manual technology, avoidance of batteries and a love of old-fashioned gadgets which itself is a topic needs further research.

However, it is not just ‘the look’ which adds value. Retro objects can also help to stimulate environmental and ecological concerns among the younger generation in the UK by encouraging a desire to reuse and recycle and in effect, to live more sustainably. Evidence of that became apparent in my conversation with R who reused

the juice jars to keep flowers and dried herbs in whilst aesthetically, she approved of the retro quality of the jars.

During the interviews, the example of the Aga was mentioned by two of the informants and by the participants in the first focus group discussion. Clearly, its uniqueness and longevity signify the distinction of taste and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) of the user. This aspect can sometimes be so bold that it disguises the feature I would like to establish, its playful characteristic. How this product in the context of Britain became a praiseworthy icon of trust in the kitchen and a symbol of prosperity could constitute a separate research project, so at this point, I will only define its playful aspects and the engagements it affords in order to explain this specific element of its popularity.

During the fieldwork, I was introduced to two families who owned an Aga stove in order to understand more about this product. The two houses were private residences located in the Morningside area of south-west Edinburgh. One was in an older couple's Victorian cottage with a small kitchen, and the other one was in a villa belonging to a younger family with two children in an open-plan kitchen. As was mentioned by informant H, it was obvious to me that the Aga is often used as a sign of wealth. Why the Aga with its humble appearance is popular and not a new, slick high-tech gas oven with all its digital applications, is less clear. Cooking on an Aga is very different from other cookers. Everyday recipes would not work with an Aga and there are special instructions to show people what and how to cook on one of them. It is considered retro while it has had almost the same appearance since it was first introduced to the British in 1929 (Whitehead et al., 2011). Nevertheless, innovation with regard to its efficiency continues to develop. The latest models advertised in the [Aga booklet](#) claim to be remotely controlled via the web or a Smartphone (Whitehead, et. al., 2011).



Figure 5-5: The Aga cooker in a Victorian cottage in Morningside, Edinburgh



Figure 5-6: The Aga cooker in a villa in south-west Edinburgh

However, its previous characteristics are not undermined by these innovations. The people who grew up in a house with an Aga explained how interactions with the appliance involve more than a straightforward use and that even the functional elements of daily routine can involve a level of playfulness, from sitting on top of it, playing with its different closet-like compartments, playing around it to keep warm on cold days, to using its heat to dry clothes and wet shoes.

Besides its social signification, appreciation of the Aga in my interviews is connected to the ritual of usage and the creativity it affords to the user. It has clearly become an item for personal rituals and life stories. In my opinion, the Aga is playful and by ‘playful’, I mean all those pleasurable engaging moments can happen in using a functional system that takes the user to the realm of fantasy and the ‘imaginary’. As discussed in the concept of ‘usage mode’ defined by Hassenzahl (see page 69), both modes of play and function around the Aga can be active and receive relative priority. ‘Action mode’ or here ‘playful mode’, in regard to ‘goal mode’ or utilitarian aspects of the cooker will be defined. Playful moments are those so-called ‘zone out’ moments, creative and fully engaging moments which give joy to the user. Although everyday objects can provide such moments, some appliances easily engage the users and provide the playful mode and the Aga cooker is one of them. Playing with the heat of different compartments while using it, and the innovative usage of the heat engages the user sensually, emotionally and physically. In order to understand this quality, one might need to compare the Aga with other stoves and big appliances in the kitchen and consider how much they can be engaging. For example, using a refrigerator or dishwasher does not afford such physicality and attention, whilst working with an Aga offers a unique, active and vibrant experience with total immersion.

Play in my definition has a social aspect which the Aga can present as well. J’s appreciation of the Aga and her experience of working with it in her ex-boyfriend’s flat, presents the social side of cooking. In addition, the Aga in Britain symbolises family life and socio-economic values, for example, the term ‘Aga saga’, refers to a genre of British literature that consists of humorous portraits of the good standard of living enjoyed by certain wealthy families in the countryside (Cambridge

Dictionaries Online, 2009). The Aga is also connected to the concept of slow cooking and a slower lifestyle for people including J. The speed of modern life and the fast-food culture do not leave much time to appreciate the fun side of events hence if you would like to enjoy your time and play for a moment, you need to slow down.

The Aga shows that playful engagements in products take place at different levels and personal stories and connections are usually evidenced. It is a sensory appliance which can engage all the senses and be used for different purposes. On a more personal level, most people who have an Aga will be able to share memories and stories related to its use, which further demonstrates the dominant presence of this appliance in the home, not just in the kitchen. The desire to have an Aga, with all its possible connotations of conferred social status (Southerton, 2001), is one of the kitchen appliances that implicitly affords playfulness and exemplifies how 'longer lasting products' (Cooper, 2010) can be entertaining for people without directly emphasising their playful visual features, technology or newness.

Replay featured again in my research in relation to the culture of using second-hand goods. It is a phenomenon that has grown in recent years. According to an online report in *The Express*, newspaper, acquiring items from charity shops, car-boot sales and free-exchange websites has increased in Britain and it is not just among people who are struggling financially but also among the middle class who are supportive of the idea (Derbyshire, 2011). This has resulted in many older items and styles attracting the attention of many people because another chance is provided to experience that object again, in a different context and time, similar to a time when play is finished and the player wants to engage in play again. Not all objects have this quality. The adaptation of the outdated functions to gain new benefits, even if only in appearance, is to play with time and the meanings of those previous functions which can have symbolic meanings.

In many research projects, the commodification of cookery has been reported (Short, 2006, p.2), however, in my observations, I found anti-consumerism and sustainable approaches to consumption were important from the informants' side. Second-hand appliances, shopping at the farmers' markets, living with the basics, avoiding

judgement about the property of others and being realistic about their abilities all signify a mature understanding of consumerism and an active alteration of behaviour as a consequence.

This situation compares to a time when women were the target audience for kitchen appliance adverts and consumption of the goods advertised. Middle-class women who defined themselves by what they purchased as a consumer are now replaced by women who define themselves by what they can do and achieve, at least according to my study of these five middle-class young women.

Consumerism aims to create a need in people by making goods and services desirable. As such, many new modern kitchen appliances are introduced to the public with a promise to disguise the user's lack of culinary skills, thus, these appliances can empower people to cook and enjoy working in the kitchen. Raffaella Poletti, the Italian design author, in appreciation of Alessi's collaboration with Philips in the design of three electric kitchen-wares, explains that these efforts have been made to brighten the dull experience of kitchen chores. Poletti believes such efforts go back to after the First World War, when a series of new ideas in marketing was employed to attract the public and particularly middle-class housewives whose lifestyle had been changed as a result of the war. For example, in 1929, the catalogue for Idea Labour-Saving Home stated that:

... the modern housewife has discovered that, if she uses the correct household appliance for her work, if the right tool is used for every task, she can have a perfect home, and at the same time, plenty of leisure. Housekeeping can become a game. It can be played to time with pauses for rest and periods of effort. It can provide endless interest and be the subject of daily experiment but, without the saving help of the correct household appliances it loses its glamour and becomes dull and wearisome. (Poletti, 1994, p.50)

This attitude is not limited to that time, and today's market is trying to dictate the same message that 'housekeeping can become a game'. However, critics of the modern kitchen believe that increasingly sophisticated equipment will lead to a decrease in domestic skills. 'The less time the wife has to look after the home, for

example because she has a job, and the less culinary expertise she has, the more likely people are to buy a high-tech automated kitchen.’ (Mielke, 2004)

No one denies the convenience of some kitchen appliances, and men as well as women may think that by acquiring a stylish built-in kitchen and high technology, one could cook better. Nevertheless, in practice, the consequence of such thinking is a phenomenon which became famous as the ‘kitchen appliance graveyard’, as mentioned by the older women in the discussion groups. It was also mentioned by younger women in my interviews that there is a gadget attitude that can dominate for some people, while my informants seemed to be happy with what they had. For example, R criticised Jamie Oliver’s flavour shaker, and thought a jam jar would do the same job. Similarly, M said that instead of buying a £4000 coffee maker, she preferred to use her kettle. In addition, she believed that cooking is only easier and enjoyable if one can cook.

You can have all the gadgets in the world; if you’re gonna burn a tin of beans then you’re a rubbish cook, aren’t you? ... If you can’t cook then you can’t cook. (Interview with H, Appendix III)

Poletti also refers to housekeeping as a game. She differentiates between the pleasure of having spare time and working in the kitchen, but based on the observations in this study, I argue that these two can overlap at some points. Working in the kitchen and cooking your own food or for others can be a pleasurable act; there may be no need to have ‘pauses for rest’ (Poletti, 1994, p.50). Apart from having or not having any time-saving appliances, the immersion and devotion to the process of food preparation is desirable and of interest to some people, such as my informants.

Technology and the market have a lot to offer to improve the quality of household work, but what I observed in terms of the consumption of kitchen appliances was more about investing in fantasy than reality. Collecting fancy baking tins, decorative cast-iron casserole dishes, antique cast-iron scales, the idea of farm-fresh food, a passion for retro design, buying second-hand goods, to mention some examples, is evidence of the extent to which the line between fantasy and reality in terms of cooking and housekeeping has become blurred.

A short observation from my fieldwork might illustrate this better. In my first visit to J, she said she needed a wok to make her favourite Vietnamese meal more easily when she was struggling to stir the ingredients required for this oriental cuisine. Then she showed me her most recent purchase - a small bright orange Le Creuset pan (typically representative of retro French farmhouse-style cooking utensils) for sautéing onions. The heavy yet tiny pan was a very personal choice that seemed connected more to the world of fantasy than to reality, or an extension of fantasy to real life as its usefulness was limited in terms of its size and weight.

5.3 The open-plan kitchen

Part of the conversation in both the discussion groups and with the informants focused on the layout of kitchens today. The participants believed that more than any other changes in kitchen appliances, it was the open-plan kitchen that had led to the democratisation of the kitchen and helped to make it an informal place. This fact is also supported by market studies which report the kitchen has been transformed in a way to allow for more leisure. In 2006, Mintel Group Ltd. reported in its *Food for Home Entertaining – UK Report* that kitchens, dining rooms and lounges are being merged into ‘a single relaxing and socialising space’ which provides ‘a multi-functional area [that] tends to facilitate more informal entertaining occasions that may often be unplanned, and thus, by their nature are more frequent’ (Mintel, 2006).

This function of new kitchens is also supported by celebrity designer, Philippe Starck, who says:

The dining room comes into the kitchen. The kitchen becomes a dining room. We can stay a long time in the kitchen. That means the living room disappears, so there is only one room, which is the kitchen. (Starck, 2010)

In all the ethnographic interviews, the preference for having a large dining kitchen was clear; most preferred a kitchen in which one can gather friends and family, eat and talk together. Informants were more concerned with the size of the kitchen than other qualities. In contrast with the focus group participants’ comments and what Hand and Shove illustrated in the study of contemporary kitchen regimes presented by design magazines, my informants kept the worktop full with their small electric

kitchen appliances, other small equipment or decorative objects such as flower pots, salt and pepper pots, bottles or even coloured Le Creuset pots. I would not see this as a sign of mess or disorder, but it does illustrate the easygoing lifestyle of the housekeeper who displays her taste by such objects and did not mind being judged by them. R's new espresso machine sits beside her retro radio, the ordinary kettle and toaster. In G's kitchen, like others, a row of bottles, from oil to soya sauce and vinegar filled a corner of the worktop.

In cultural studies, decoration has been addressed as a way to present taste, style and social status (Bourdieu, 1984). In my observations, I did not find many personal elements of decoration in the studied kitchens. These elements were limited to pots of plants, images on walls, and some antiques or decorative functional kitchen appliances such as Le Creuset iron pots, and decorative pepper mills. However, the observed branded bottles of olive oil, vinegar, soya sauce and the containers of other seasoning ingredients can be used easily to represent their particular cultural capital and 'marks of distinction' (Bourdieu, 1984). It was noticeable that sharing the flat with others, being tenant households, and being in early career roles were the main reasons that decided these women to spend less time and money on decoration and to keep the kitchen as functional and simple as possible. In addition, there were personalised items in the observed kitchens which specifically reflected the informants' taste, for example, R's retro radio and the piano in J's kitchen, which could have been kept in her separate living room.

5.4 The playful kitchen

In the literature review, three main categories of kitchen have been studied and articulated: the kitchen in its traditional existence, the modern kitchen and the postmodern approach. Through my fieldwork I have attempted to explore the definition of the kitchen and expand its practices to a territory that includes play and entertainment.

Recalling three mimeses for play introduced by De Mul (page 50), (1) play as a pre-figuration of our daily life, (2) play as a free act in designated time and place with specific rules, (3) and play as a construction of ludic identity, a reflexive quality of

the construction of self (De Mul, 2005), I think the kitchen through history can be defined by such mimeses; and a triple stage model can be developed to define the kitchen. Accordingly, the kitchen will be defined based on not only functional characteristics but it includes its playful qualities. It is a new approach which advocates the fun-led kitchen instead of the food-led kitchen.

While De Mul's first mimesis illustrates play as an essential practice simulating daily life and preparation for social life, the concept of the traditional kitchen marks out the kitchen as an essential part to provide the necessities besides other aspects of life such as bathing, washing and sitting together. The kitchen could not be seen as a separate space and did have an autonomous entity.

The second definition is a modern approach to play which tries to introduce and acknowledge the importance of play and leisure for human beings but with a very distinct division from real life - one is either playing or working. The person is playing as long as play time is going on and when play is finished, serious or real life returns (Huizinga, 1949). The modern kitchen, similarly, is recognised as an autonomous place with specific characteristics and functions; one either is in the kitchen doing domestic chores or is in the living room doing other activities such as enjoying leisure time.

The third definition which is followed by contemporary approaches in pedagogy, management and philosophy introduces play as the construction of self. This approach believes that play has the ability to penetrate any aspect of our lives. In this technologically-mediated world, play has become part of what we are, and it is inseparable from our identity (De Mul, 2005, De Lange, 2010). The postmodern kitchen follows the same logic. It is mostly an open or semi-open platform, used beyond its utilitarian functions, including leisure, fun and play, and open to interpretation and personal preferences.

Play, as De Mul describes in his third mimesis, should be acknowledged as a constructive part of self and not a transient situation in childhood or limited to a specific time and place. As argued by Pink, 'play is becoming an important part of

work, business, and personal wellbeing' (Pink, 2005, p.188). 'Play will be to the 21st century what work was to the last 300 years of industrial society; our dominant way of knowing, doing and creating value' (Kane, 2004, p.63; quoted also in Pink, 2005, p.193 and Else, 2009, p.152) and finally, with only a playful attitude, we can 'maintain our adaptability, vigour and optimism in the face of an uncertain, risky demanding world' (Kane, 2004, p.63; Else, 2009, p.152). By acknowledging these we can hope this shift will happen. Francois Dubet, the French sociologist believes:

We are no longer defined purely by our social roles and have become subjects. We are involved in an experiment but do not know how it will turn out. Meals are currently bringing about a transition from order to more open forms of experimentation that are at once sensual and many-sided, and which involve us both as individuals and as members of a group. They involve both gastronomic and emotional pleasure. Because they involve conversation and negotiations, they also help to regulate relationships and encourage both analyses of the present and discussions about the future. ...Every time we pick up a fork, we are faced with alternatives, makes play, for instance, a prime role in the identity problematic but their role is always contradictory. Self-doubts grow as individuals cease to be defined by their social roles and become involved in an open-ended process of experimentation. (Kaufman, 2010, p.108)

Another example of such a personal connection is J's understanding of fun and play in the kitchen. She summarised this experience as 'playing the routines', by which she meant having the music on while performing routine chores and having some moments to oneself for thinking. Equally, her friend's habit of chopping food into a certain size and shape is a playful way to prepare ingredients for a recipe. In response to how routine activities can be playful in the kitchen, she compared her childhood with now and said cooking activities is the extension of her childhood play when she used to come back from school and pretended to cook for others. The other example is R's feeling of comfort in the kitchen as she described herself on her weblog as 'being an idiot in the kitchen, dancing around, singing badly' which in my presence, a stranger, was ruined. The sorts of activities I observed can find resonance with Caillou's definitions of play, *ilinx* (a self-defined play) and *mimicry* (simulation) that I introduced in the literature review. *Ilinx* and *vertigo* is an improvised type of play

in which the player is free from any rules, and he/she yields him/herself to arbitrary and sensory delusions. Mimicry is an exercise of the imagination, and playing a role in front of an imagined or actual audience.

On the social level, playful engagements have another component, which is the role of the other player, who may be a flatmate, a visitor or a member of the family. Other than the size and layout of the kitchen, which encourages social interaction, appliances themselves can shape a playful situation. This play can be M's poetry magnets on the refrigerator, or J's cast-iron scales that encourage her friends to experiment. The scales in her kitchen are, firstly, an iconic object from the past which calls for attention and secondly, an unfamiliar toy to play or engage with and as such, was used by the informant and her friends to guess the accurate weight of a bunch of bananas. In the study of Alessi's objects previously mentioned, similar examples were discussed in the case of the *Lilliput* salt and pepper set (see p.87) and *Magic Bunny* toothpick holder (Figure 2-9, sample 5) at the study of Chang and Wu. However, in most of Alessi's products, the engaging element is the quirky visual effect and not the function of a product. This inclusive characteristic of playfulness should demonstrate how functionality can be connected to playability.

The communicative aspects of objects in the kitchen can have different levels. Many items in the kitchens stimulate conversation, interest, curiosity, stories, memories, admiration, sympathy, surprise, laughter and joy. Any object has this potential to be used beyond its designated utilitarian functions and be redefined in a different context.

The experience of the kitchen and its appliances for the informants of this research was also accompanied with stories from the past, from family and friends, and memories of different places and different cultures. The tagine or bamboo steam basket in R's cupboards, as a result of a visit to Morocco, or a heightened curiosity about oriental foods and cooking methods, or the easy-to-use sugar pot, which she bought on her first holiday with her boyfriend to Berlin, shows how the kitchen can be multicultural in providing utensils whilst acting as a personal album of memories.

This argument clearly leads us to De Mul's definition of self in contemporary society. He explains:

Human identity [today] is not a homogeneous, self-contained entity, hidden in the depths of our inner self, but is actively constructed in a social world with the aid of various expressions, such as speech acts, consumer goods, cultural and technological artefacts, social institutions, and (life) stories. (De Mul, 2005)

Listening to music in the kitchen while cooking and doing routine kitchen tasks was a common form of entertainment for all of the informants, even for people who do not have a radio or CD player in situ because of lack of space in the kitchen. G, for instance, used her laptop to listen to music or have chats on Skype, as this was one of her routines while cooking.

It is important to note that apart from R, the rest of my informants were using other people's kitchens in the accommodation they were living in. Nevertheless, they have tried to personalise it according to their priorities, tastes and desires by rearrangement, or acquiring their favourite appliances. This is what the British anthropologist Daniel Miller calls the 'transform[ation] of the house into a home' (Miller, 1998, p.65).

None of the specifically designated 'playful' products mentioned in the product reviews of chapter two was identified in the studied kitchens. Though informants defined the kitchen as the main place in the house for social interaction, the role of appliances was not mentioned explicitly. The ideal kitchen for all of these participants was a place to bring together family and friends and enjoy cooking and eating with them.

The idealisation of modernity, the fitted kitchen, and functionalism, features which were mentioned by the older generation, did not make sense to the younger generation, and instead, optimism and enthusiasm replaced them. The younger group takes a more active role in cooking and their involvement in the kitchen skill and curiosity about food, along with the social aspects of eating, played the main role in converting a kitchen into a vibrant place. Cooking or baking skills appeared to make

the user feel more comfortable with being in the kitchen, but having less skills did not prevent them from presenting their kitchens to others and enjoying experimenting with cooking and baking recipes. In other words, for them, gadgets and kitchen appliances would not add any value to the experience of working in the kitchen unless you have some skills that you can use in it.

The kitchens I observed demonstrated an eclectic lifestyle and how some appliances could find surprising new functions, like a baking tray being used instead of a lid, personalised recipes, or old second-hand appliances still in use. I saw how most Victorian kitchen layouts have been adapted to 21st-century needs and noted the preferences for some appliances such as the Aga. The informants did not hide this interest in combining the old and new, past and present with their passion for old, second-hand and retro objects. They playfully challenged the requirements of today and tended to show off their taste through the arrangement of appliances, from local to international, with items from the past to contemporary, and with a sustainable attitude, by which their enthusiasm, joy and play becomes reinvigorating and refreshing.

Playful engagement is the result of the coming together of the four elements discussed at the beginning of this chapter: the food, the individuals, the kitchen appliances and the kitchen. The place, the assets, the person and the outcome all play their role in presenting a playful interaction. The kitchen provides grounds for playful social as well as personal interaction. Playful individuals are best able to perceive and present things in a different way and some appliances afford more playful interactions than others.

On a personal level, it is useful to recall J's childhood memory of the time she pretended to cook, and how she sees today as an extension of that sort of play. The kitchen, in the eyes of many children, is a source of play. It is a place to observe parents, to be with them, to imitate their housework and to learn from them. However, as much as it is playful, it is also potentially a place of danger. As people grow up they learn how to manage the dangers, but at the same time, for many, the kitchen loses its initial attraction and playfulness. During the course of this research,

I could see that people were often surprised when I explained the possible playful characteristics of the kitchen. People tend to forget all the fun they had in the kitchen, however, they can maintain these playful interests and can be directed to develop skills by encouraging this interest.

The kitchen indeed can be dangerous but it cannot be a reason for not cooking. Instead, I believe that a kitchen which promotes play can attract people and they can benefit from spending time in it. Play in the kitchen is among the most popular play activities that engages children and is recommended by experts to prepare children for adulthood activities (Phillips, 1992). What fascinates children about the kitchen is its role as a sensory machine of action, vibrancy and variation. To keep this sense of play in adulthood, first a change of attitude should take place. What is important to childhood should be acknowledged as being as important in adulthood.

5.5 The emergence of ludo-aesthetics of interactions

The AoI in the work of Hummels, Overbeek, and others provided the initial impetus to develop a new framework for understanding the playful aspects of interactions in product design. In a range of publications, these design academics have tried to challenge the dominant concept of aesthetics in product design, and have proposed deeper and longer lasting levels of engagement between users and products. AoI has been pursued in an effort to enhance user interaction with a product, and it emphasises that aesthetics is not only a one-dimensional interaction with a product limited to a visual or another sensory pleasure. On the contrary, it is a multi-level interaction which brings enjoyable experience beyond our cognitive skills and perception. This school of thought, as discussed, claims to have an explanation for deeper interaction, but as observed in the fieldwork, there are other interactions which are not considered in such frameworks. In other words, the aesthetics of interaction, which tries to introduce products that challenge, seduce, invite to play, surprise and give joy (Overbeeke et al., 2004, pp.8,9) does not consider play as an essential quality of contemporary life. One of the important characteristics I observed in individuals in our current society and which is missed in this theoretical framework, is the increase in playful engagements and the tendency to seek open-ended concepts within daily life.

As noted in the literature review in Chapter 2, AoI has the potential to embrace playfulness in products. It was argued that this framework is compatible with some aspects of play, but not in every aspect. Play and functionality was discussed in relation to the suggested term, ‘playability’, which accounts for the role of the user in defining the play mode of the product as opposed to its functional mode. It was also argued that the degree of playfulness can be defined in regard to needs, desires, interest and skills. The role of context in playful usage and eliciting surprise in designed sensory products were other examined elements of AoI. Finally, the playful ritual and story of use were exemplified by Hummels’ memory of using her toaster and Norman’s story of *The Tilting Tea Pot*.

As the fieldwork studies revealed, there are other playful aspects which can be perceived through the interaction with products that are difficult to explain in AoI.

These aspects mainly highlight the dynamic and bodily engagement with products (Nam and Kim, 2011), the communicative aspect and social skills (Ross and Wensveen, 2010), the distractive aspects of play and the quality of immersion (Fleming, 1998), and finally, the ‘self’ reflective quality of play (De Mul, 2005).

Play as dynamic and bodily engagement

The dynamic forms and physical engagements I observed in the kitchen practices of the informants are the essential elements of playful interactions. There was an engaging beauty in the interaction between objects and user, a beauty which extends beyond a static quality to a more dynamic and temporal quality in objects. As previously discussed, this beauty was illustrated by the example of the playful interaction with the scales, the multicoloured plastic measuring cups, the grating and whisking task, and the Aga stove.

The dynamic form and bodily engagement highlighted in the work of Tek-Jin Nam and Changwon Kim, and Ross and Wensveen are essential elements in eliciting ludic values as well as aesthetic interaction. As Nam and Kim discussed, everyday products can be transformed into more engaging and playful products with ‘extra experiential value’ (Nam and Kim, 2011) by recreating them based on three elements: 1) the creation of narratives about imaginary creatures, 2) embedded serendipitous functions, and 3) physical interactions. According to them, ‘physical interaction is used as the main means of encouraging users to interpret the narrative of the imaginary creatures and supporting basic and serendipitous functions of the product’ (Nam and Kim, 2011). The physical interactivity they propose is more than the pressing of buttons, or clicking on a screen. For example, in *The Talkative Cushion*, Kim and Nam comment that the shape is inspired by a comic strip talk bubble and is used as a functional aspect of the product. The shape suggests natural physical interaction, such as hugging, leaning and pressing. The tail of the talk bubble is the activation handle and pressing with five fingers adjusts the volume and playback (Nam and Kim, 2011). Kim and Nam believe *The Talkative Cushion* is a cushion used to record sounds and works as a playful communication medium between family members.

With regard to Ross and Wensveen, in *Designing Behaviour in Interaction: Using Aesthetic Experience as a Mechanism for Design*, they suggest that the notion of ‘aesthetic interaction’ consists of four principles: 1) practical use next to intrinsic value, 2) social and ethical dimensions, 3) satisfying dynamic form, and 4) actively involving people’s bodily, cognitive, emotional and social skills. In this study they look for ‘a new language of form that incorporates the dynamics of behaviour’ (Ross and Wensveen, 2010). This dynamic form is presented in the example of the experimental reading lamp with a sensory motor which responds directly to the user’s hand, behaviour and the passing of time. What they demonstrate in this project is that ‘[f]orm in design often relates to static aspects of products, like shape and colour. [...] Designing for Aesthetic Interaction includes striving for satisfying form in the dynamics of interaction’ (Ross and Wensveen, 2010). This dynamic is in close relation to the user’s behaviour. The physical and bodily engagements provide more sensory interactions and make the experience of use richer and deeper.

As my observations substantiate these academic arguments, I propose that play in LAoI is about physically and bodily engaging with a product. As the examples of the Aga cooker and the cast-iron scales demonstrate, physical engagement makes the experience of usage different from similar products. The first step towards designing playful artefacts is to consider physically tangible engagements and interactions.

Play as communication

From my observations, social and communicative interactions play a significant role in defining playful interactions, as the player is not considered alone and play often takes place in relation to other players. Again, the example of the scale with playful qualities is useful, or the refrigerator ‘word’ magnets that let you create poetry for entertainment and communication, and the importance of the dining kitchen in bringing friends and family together in a relaxed and fun environment, all these examples revealed how social interactions can lead to playful interaction in my ethnographic study. Likewise, the examples of students’ work at Edinburgh College of Art, such as, *The Toilet Megaphone*, *The Interactive Drawer*, *The Music Post Box*, *The Public Story Teller*, and *The Music Resonance Maker*, they all emphasised the

need for designers to address issues of communication between people. As demonstrated before, many of the communicative aspects of those products included playfulness (Table 4-2, page 135 and Diagram 4-1, page 134).

Similarly, as mentioned by Ross and Wensveen, the defining of aesthetic interaction puts the emphasis on the social context and the communicative aspects of design. They argue that social skills are as important as emotional skills and other needs in an interaction. Social skills have not been considered in Hummels' AoIs. The same criticism is valid with regard to user-centred design, as its focus is more on the individual and not interactions in relation to others. This is a critique which followers of practice-oriented design argue shows the limit of user-centred design (Julier, 2007).

User interactions in product design in relation to computer technology have received more attention, but at its centre, it advocates a holistic experience in using designed products. To achieve this, the interactions between users and products need to be augmented on different levels, from functional to cultural levels, from needs to desires and emotions, from all senses to perceptions and cognitions. However, the advocates of such interactions tend to see the user as an individual and usually do not explain interaction in relation to other people. This aspect was examined in the fieldwork through my informants' social interactions.

Based on the work of T. Visser, M. H. Vastenburg, and D. V. Keyson, design scholars at Delft University of Technology, tangible physical interactions have been prioritised over abstract screen-based interactions, and have enhanced social relationships. They quote Rittenbruch and McEwan (2009) that 'tangible interactive objects, opposed to screen-based displays as the basis of Social Awareness systems, [are] maybe more effective in a home context as they are considered by users to be more intimate, simple, emotionally meaningful and aesthetically pleasing' (Rittenbruch and McEwan, 2009 quoted in Visser et al., 2011). However, the aim is to provide social awareness which is a communicative aspect in a design. Their argument reinforces how the physicality of interaction, the first characteristic of

playful interaction, is linked to the communicative aspect, the second element I have tried to articulate.

With reference again to Nam and Kim's research on ludic values, they suggested that by combining ludic values with design intentions, such as education, supporting sustainable energy consumption or communication between people, designers can positively improve bad behaviours. Their emphasis on ludic value is linked to this improved communication without affecting the original functions of products. (Nam, Kim, 2011).

Play as distraction and immersion

Immersion is a mode a person experiences when completely disconnected or distracted from the reality that surrounds him or her. Marie-Laure Ryan, the literary scholar at the University of Colorado, explains this experience in the world of text as, 'the frozen metaphors of language dramatise the reading experience as an adventure worthy of the most thrilling novel: the reader plunges under the sea (immersion), reaches a foreign land (transportation), is taken prisoner (being caught up in a story, being a captured audience) and loses contact with all other realities (being lost in a book)' (Ryan, 2001, p.94). It is an experience initiated from the world of narratives, when one yields the self to the rules of the text, and the journey commences.

Play in the LAoI has a characteristic of immersion. If a product is considered as a text and interaction with it is like a reading of the text, then a quality of self-immersion will be experienced. The immersion one experiences is a distraction from all other things that happen surrounding him/her. Here I would like to recall some of the informants' experiences in this regard. J's experience with the scales, wherein examining the scales and weighing the potatoes was engaging on such a level that, for a moment, I felt that she was mentally transported to somewhere other than the kitchen and she seemed forgot my presence as well. In the case of R, after my visit to her, I saw a post on her weblog commenting on the event, and I felt that my presence was not a pleasant experience for her as it hindered and distracted her from immersing herself in that place of personal joy and imagination that she usually experiences in the kitchen. The engaging experience mentioned in regard to the Aga

stove was similar. J's experience was about a process of thinking and acting in accordance to the heat of the different stove's compartments. All these experiences were mentioned as being enjoyable and playful by the participants.

'Immersion is an important part of entertainment' (Fleming, 1998; Dholakia et al., 2000) and has been theorised in literature, virtual reality, game studies, and other media studies. Ryan, in *The Text as World: Theories of Immersion*, explains that the reader of any text shares the joy of creation equally with the author of the text and is involved in playful creation (Ryan, 2001).

Immersion is an essential element in reading texts and narratives. The openness and ambiguity in products allow different narratives to take place in interactions. Perhaps the recent emphasis on producing narratives in new design frameworks such as AoI, ludic values, and so on, is to reinforce the interactive and immersive quality of products. Hummels and her co-authors in *Knowing, Doing and Feeling*, remark that:

A product should be an open system, which is not an open book, rather a tempting means for exploration and interaction. Due to the advancing digital technology, intelligent products can even adapt to the user and actively help to create a never-ending story. (Hummels, 2001)

This never-ending story is linked to openness and ambiguity, the previously mentioned qualities of play which now finds its new link to immersion as an untold aspect of playful engagement. I would argue that this perspective calls for an awareness when designing products of the future as they will need to provide more engaging stories and memories to elicit stronger interactions and immersion.

Play as a way to construct a playful identity

The last quality of play that I believe should be considered in any holistic approach to interactions with products is the playful construction of self. As mentioned, construction of self or identity is believed as the ultimate condition to reach pleasure and enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, Blythe, Hassenzahl, 2004). Considering play as a part of everyday human life, and not limiting it to childhood or a specific time and place will be the first step towards acknowledging the playful identity.

The idea of *homo ludens* (man the player), by Huizinga, was taken up by contemporary scholars. Sutton-Smith (2006), Jacques Ehrmann (1968), Roger Caillois (1961), and Richard Schechner (1976), among others, referred to his seminal work, and challenged it, nevertheless, it took more than half a century to recognise play as a crucial element in human identity, and the conceptualisation of ludic identity. As a result, looking at users as *homo ludens* will open a new window for designers. ‘Designing for homo ludens’ (Gaver, 2002) should give accord to play as a central and crucial element not only in a product’s interaction but also in the construction of socio-cultural identities.

Discussing play as a way to construct the playful or ludic identity makes one wonder how to trace such an identity. In this thesis, I have attempted to avoid defining playful identity as a separate aspect, although it has been discussed through the elements of product interactions. Playful identity is shaped in relation to all different playful interactions and it is not something outside, disconnected to the culture of the present time. There is a mutual relationship between what one uses and who one is. In all the aspects of playful interaction already discussed, the significant role of the user has been highlighted. For example, there were no tangible or concrete playful characteristics or features in the scales, the Aga cooker or the baking devices in the kitchen to associate them with play. In fact, in practice, the kitchen itself had turned into a playground, whilst, for many, it has kept its serious quality and is seen as a means to an end. Therefore, it was the owner or the user of these products who made a playful experience out of those ordinary objects. It is true that objects can afford play in their functional boundaries, but it is the player’s role and choice to undertake the possibilities and be creative, imaginative and interactive in the world of objects.

Any interaction with a product which helps users to reconstruct their ludic being can be categorised in this element of LAoI. A product affords playful characteristics when it encourages dynamic and bodily interactions, imagination, creativity, personal narratives, social interactions and communication, regardless of benefiting from new technologies or not. In addition, a mutual relationship exists between users and the way they use the product. The playful usage reflects their identity and the playful identity reinforces the playful interactions. There is a mutually reflective

effect on the user and the product. The more an object opens itself to interpretation, physical interaction and narratives, the more playfulness can be reflected in the practice.

In the context of new emerging mobile media culture, and the plentiful playful activities available in the 21st century, it would be hard to ignore the ludic culture of the time, as De Mul puts it, the ‘ludification of societies’ (De Mul, 2005). While the virtual space of the new media tries to hide the actual mathematical language of the medium and comes more and more to resemble the real world (Turkle, 2005), in practice, it reduces the serious appearance to become more playful and fantasised. Playfulness becomes an important characteristic of any online website and the reason for returning and revisiting a web page (Dholakia, 2000). It was evident in this study that online recipes were preferable to recipe books, and from my own experience, online recipe websites allow for interaction and further exploration into other creative possibilities in cookery.

With regard to the matter of food and culture, as argued, society has witnessed a shift from a serious way of looking at kitchen practices to a more fantasised and playful approach. The examples of Nigella Lawson in her kitchen and how, parodically, she wants to be a ‘domestic goddess’ (Lawson, 2000), the playful food projects of Heston Blumenthal, the easygoing enthusiastic characteristics of Jamie Oliver and his online presence, among others, reinforce De Mul’s understanding of the ludification of society and ludic identities.

The player is not considered alone and playful identity forms in relation to others, and the fluid construct of playful identity navigates through binary oppositions. For example, the acquiring of a tagine or the Asian steam baskets defines R as someone who tends to fuse her Western culture with Eastern culture. Similarly, J’s old cast-iron scales and the traditional teapot connect her, as a contemporary young girl, to antiques of the past. Gendered roles also have been affected by new changes in societies. For example, H’s cousin in the ethnographic interviews and M’s son in the first focus group discussion evidence how men’s cooking practices do not match older attitudes about gender. This observable fact is about escaping from predefined

social assumptions which can only be successful through a playful identity, an identity ‘actively constructed in a social world’ (De Mul, 2005) wherein consumer goods, cultural and technological artefacts, social institutions and life stories make up the essential part of it (De Mul, 2005).

Based on the observations and informants’ statements, a table of LAoI (Table 5-2) was developed. The first column of this table lists five aspects of aesthetics of interactions in order to define and demonstrate multi-level functions in using the Aga and the iron cast scale. At the same time, it is also an attempt to make another level more explicit, the playful quality of engagements and their connections to defining the self (column 4). In the category ‘beyond the functions’ it was observed that people acquire different appliances for a variety of reasons, from memory to styles, from outside other cultures to within their own. In fact, the boundaries are blurred and the presentation of self tends to be playful. This is perhaps to be expected since the identification of self is not a fixed linear presentation which one can predefine or prefigure. It stretches itself through the past and future, here and there, stylish and personal and serious and playful. In fact, a ludic quality shadows the serious functions of the past. The available range of choices allows the users to choose more than one way of expressing the self. The last column presnets how interactions with such products can lead to the playful level of interactions and LAoI.

Aesthetics of interaction	Observations in the case of the Aga	Observations in the case of the Scale	Output identity	Ludo-Aesthetics of interactions
Functional mode (versus playful mode)	High performance, satisfaction in use, provides choices, multifunctional, affords unintended and unexpected functions	High performance and satisfaction in use	I am what I can do and achieve. I achieve what I want	Highly functional, multifunctional, affording unintended functions
Beyond functions	Connects people, fulfils desires and emotional needs, presents distinctive values	Concern for the environment, entertaining, desirable, a combination of old functions and new, connects people and stimulates conversation	I am what I feel, desire, expect to be	Communicative, desirable, attractive and emotional
Senses	Rich, sensory engagement, stimulates a sense of smell, touch, hearing, vision and eventually, taste, bodily and physically engaging	Rich, sensory engagement, stimulates a sense of smell, touch, hearing, vision, bodily and tactilely engaging	I am what I feel and sense	Highly engaging: sensory and physical
Context	Item of the past in the modern context, combines the rural with the urban	Surprise, socialising, entertaining, item of past times, nostalgic	I am where I like to be	Immersive and distractive functions, personal and innovative usage, brings together the local and the exotic/international, new and old, high-tech and manual
Narratives	Stimulates memories and stories from the past. Represents personal choice and taste, symbolic, with a bold presence	Stimulates memories and stories from the past. Represents personal choice and taste, symbolic	I am what I fantasise. I am who I want to be and tell	Challenging self, acting with others, story of self and others, revitalising and evokes memories, revealing playful self

Table 5-2: Table of Ludo-aesthetics of interactions (LAoI) in using the Aga and the iron cast scale

Aesthetics of interaction	Observations	Kitchen	Ludo-Aesthetics of interactions
Functional possibilities and performance of the product	Highly functional, many choices, concern for healthy and homemade food, a combination of old functions and new products, efficient	A functional machine	Bodily engaging
Users' desires, needs, interests and skills, perceptual, cognitive and emotional	Heart of the home, socialising, entertaining, nostalgic and exotic, old and new, retro and high-tech, represents a social and cultural state	A socio-cultural machine	Communicative
Richness with respect to all senses	Sensory engagement: sense of smell, orchestra of sounds, informative and colourful, taste satisfaction, bodily and tactile engagement	A sensory machine	Immersive and distractive Bodily engaging
General context	Socialising, entertaining, dining, being and not being in the place	A playground	Construction of playful identity
Possibility to create one's own story and ritual	Revealing and challenging the self, acting with others, story of self and others, revitalising and evoking memories	A story-telling machine	Entertaining and playful

Table 5-3: Table of Ludo-aesthetics of interactions (LAoI) in the kitchen

As the example of the kitchen here demonstrates (Table 5-3), the serious concept of the functional kitchen and the idea of the meal machine can be taken to more enjoyable and playful experiences for people, and in doing so, old boundaries can be discarded. People such as my informants present the ludic nature of their identity through their playfulness, their skills and their interests in cooking and baking, rather than demonstrating this quality through concrete playful appliances, such as Alessi products. In addition, the example of the Aga shows such playfulness can be projected through social motivations, attitudes and behaviour.

A change of attitude from believing in the separation of play and real life to believing in play as an essential part of reality and everyday life needs to happen. As the gap between serious matters and playfulness disappears, there is a hope that people can benefit from an increased feeling of wellbeing (Pink, 2005, p.188), and a more established sustainability (Nam and Kim, 2011). Play facilitates learning and communication, and makes stronger attachments with products and bonds between people.

Thus, I propose the framework of LAoI in defining the interaction with designed artefacts as a key to explaining and acknowledging contemporary users' behaviour and experience. A series of enjoyable interactions that provoke ludic and playful moments between users and products was defined to fill the gap in previous thinking. This approach represents the characteristics of products which are more open, engaging, joyful, exploratory and adventurous (serendipitous). It acknowledges the user as *homo ludens* or the owner of playful identity. As a result, a longer-lasting effect of a sense of attachment due to specific functions and meanings is experienced by the users. Playful products can be open-ended with meanings subject to personal and social experience and narratives. They present a high level of physical interaction, dynamism and immersion as presented in the examples of the Aga gas stove and the cast-iron scales. Finally, they reflect a quality of self, the playful or ludic identity of the users.

Designers should give more prominence to the framework of LAoI as a useful tool through which they may be able to provide us with more engaging and enjoyable moments with products and to enhance our social life and wellbeing.

5.6 Different scenarios for future designs and studies

One of the aims of this interdisciplinary research is to equip designers with a new design framework which includes recent socio-cultural movements in society. As the approach of this research is theory based and not practice, in order to make the result more tangible for designers and students in product design, I developed four different design scenarios. Building scenarios provides an inexpensive way of visualising design ideas in the early stages with the aim of giving a better understanding of a user, a specific person in a specific context of use and not the general user.

My scenarios seek to show the efficiency of embracing the ludo-aesthetics framework in product design. These scenarios are focused on the kitchen and cooking. By visualising different problems related to imaginative personas, I intend to gain a better understanding of how final users are likely to behave and think this should be reflected in the process of designing products. Although the personas in these scenarios are imaginary, they are based on the data I gathered and the observations I made in the course of the fieldwork.

As was noted in the introduction to this thesis, product design should take a role in providing more effective solutions in regards to social problems. Despite all the potential that the kitchen today has to offer, thanks to product engineers, designers and interior designers, still design efforts have not been able to contribute much in offering healthier alternatives. Some parts of British society are still struggling to combat obesity or malnutrition: older people find themselves more isolated and detached from relatives so lose their interest in food and cooking, whilst reports show younger generations lack the skills to enjoy cooking and eating (Short, 2006). As a result, young couples, single adults and older people do not cook, and children often miss the opportunity to learn to cook and fail to understand why it is important to eat healthy food. Meanwhile, the consumption of fast food, convenience or semi-ready food, as well as takeaways, continues to increase.

On the other hand, I observed an enthusiastic group of people who struggle to keep healthy and enjoy happy lifestyles by putting more effort into cooking at home and sharing homemade meals. These efforts are parallel to many national projects which advocate the advantages of cooking and providing access to fresh and healthy food for more people. In addition, there are numerous educational TV series and entertainment programmes which focus on food and cooking, with master chefs and cooks from those programmes now classed as celebrities while their products are marketed worldwide. At the same time, TV series are dubbed in different languages, sold as formats which countries can buy and adapt for themselves, and books, DVDs or branded designed cooking tools and kitchenware are part of the spin-off merchandise. At the same time, the issue of the body and beauty, linked to food and eating, is being given greater consideration than ever before. Diets are discussed in sections of many newspapers and journals, and advice is given as to what to eat and what not. Anybody can benefit; there are remedies for simple sore throats to lethal cancers. From a cultural perspective, the issue of healthy food and ‘organic food’ has introduced new lifestyles and terms, for example: vegetarian, veggie, vegan, raw food; and various kinds of diets: low calorie diets, gluten-free diets and more recent adventures include eating flowers, insects and wild vegetables have all encouraged new lifestyles which often raise serious debates among family and friends and challenge common eating habits and behaviours.

In effect, these developments herald a big contrast between two possibilities in relation to the future of kitchen design; one is destructive, passive and disappointing, and the other is promising, active and positive. This polarisation demonstrates that good design has the potential to advocate and reinforce the positive and playful aspects of personalities (and domestic culture) with long-ranging implications for mental health and physical wellbeing. The four main parameters of dynamic and bodily engagement, communication, distraction and immersion and the construct of playful identity demonstrated in the framework of LAoI have been set in a way to help designers create more chances for users to playfully use and experiment with products. The scenarios developed here try to address some of these difficulties, highlight the importance of the LAoI framework and the role of designers as problem-solvers.

The everyday meal organiser for young adults

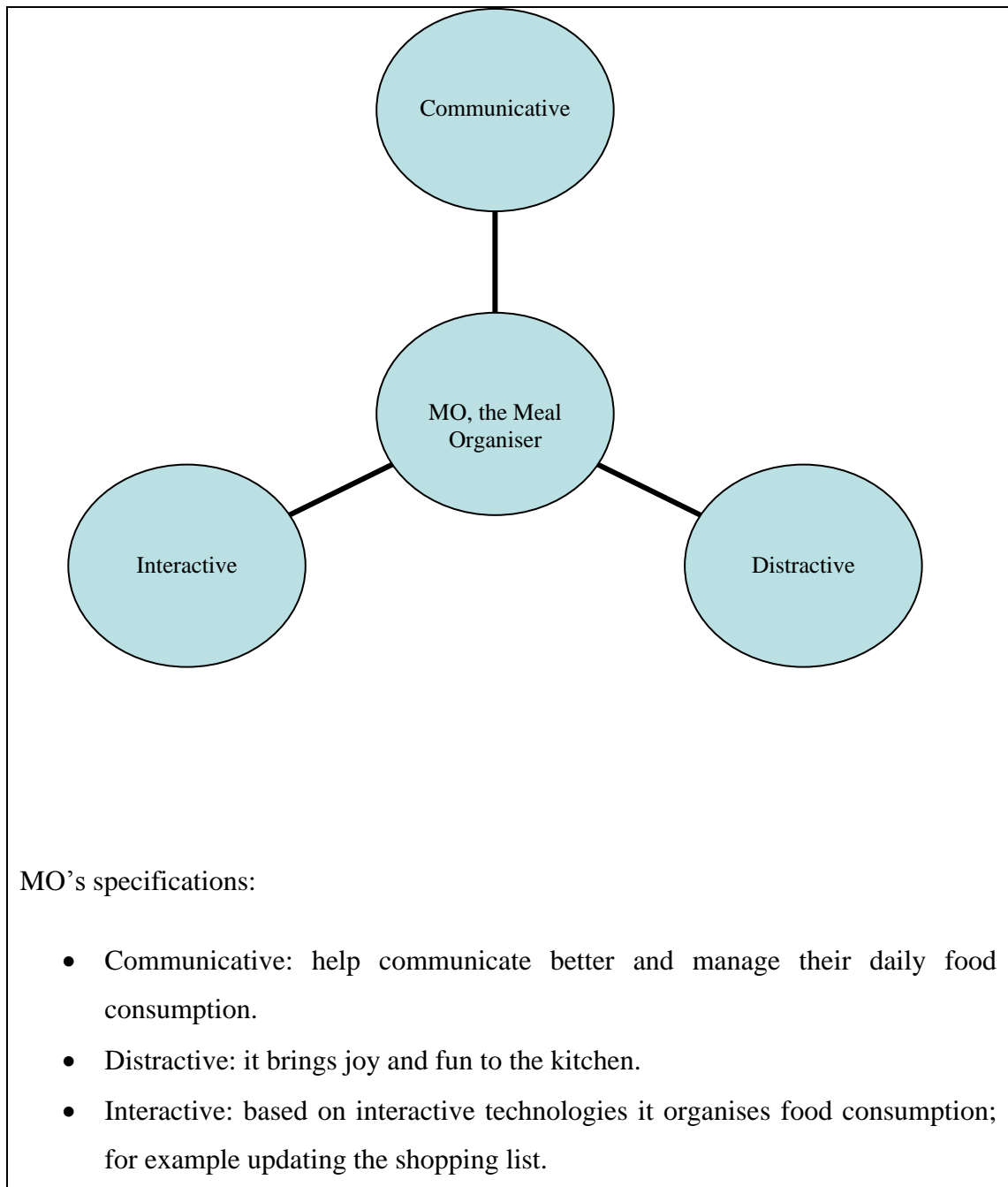
Many young people try to become independent after going to university and on graduation. For some, it is difficult as they do not have the skills to take care of themselves and beyond that, to communicate properly with their peer groups when it comes to sharing spaces. The following scenario presents a situation in which two sisters live independently for the first time and the problems they encounter. Communicative and distractive aspects in LAoI have been the focus in order to solve the problem in this case.

Heather and Laura are sisters living in Edinburgh. Heather, 23, is two years older than Laura and on finishing her studies in law she found a job in a charity immediately. Laura is studying history and literature at university. Laura was excited about the idea of living a bit more independently and suggested moving to a central part of the city to be closer to the university and enjoy a lively city-centre environment. So together, she and Heather left their parents' suburban home and moved to a new flat in the city centre, to test the independent life they aspired to.

The flat was fully furnished and they did not need to acquire anything. Their parents insisted on buying something special for them as a gift but the girls asked them to wait and see what they might need in practice and in the future. Everything seemed to be going smoothly. The sisters had breakfast together and left home at the same time and were together again in the evenings and during the weekends, and they visited their parents from time to time. They watched TV together, mostly Laura's favourite TV series, and sometimes they went out for a walk or caught up with friends, which mostly involved eating out. That was really nice but their tight budget did not let them go out very often.

At home also, they both found eating and cooking was a challenge. They struggled to find time to cook, while takeaways were too expensive. Besides, they were brought up having fresh homemade food everyday all the years when they were living with their parents. Shortage of time was not the only excuse for not cooking; they were not **well organised** in terms of shopping regularly and storing the ingredients properly. Laura, who was more flexible in terms of time, said she would do the shopping, and

in return, Heather promised to cook their favourite dishes every other day after work. In practice, this division of labour did not work. Laura often forgot to check the refrigerator and make a list of ingredients, so most foods were found rotten or unused. She also forgot the ingredients for some recipes so not having them to hand, Heather could not cook the specific dishes Laura wanted. Heather sometimes did the shopping to help out, which made things even worse. They ended up having double the quantity of some ingredients and not enough of others. Of course, there was a **communication problem** but it was not only that that made Laura unhappy. When Heather wanted to cook, she did not want to be alone in the kitchen, so then she would call on Laura for different reasons, from giving her this or that ingredient, to asking about a recipe. Laura could not understand Heather's behaviour and complained all the time that if Heather was the cook then she should not disturb her about minor things. Then they started blaming each other for not being responsible, and gradually, their initial enthusiasm for **independent** life disappeared. So their happiness did not last long as they found themselves tired, argumentative and hungry, most of the time. They also took the fight to their parents and each of them blamed the other for being immature and irresponsible. This continued until the parents stepped in. After much searching, they decided to buy them the Meal Organiser (MO) to help them to **organise their dinner and shopping lists**. Since they have had the MO they can **communicate better** in terms of what they want to eat, need to buy and cook. It is an **interactive device**, and sometimes dealing with it comes with some **funny ideas**. Their parents are also involved, to some extent. The girls can take the MO to their parents' home and **share their food ideas** with them. With the MO they have been able to cook from scratch more often and beyond that, they have **more fun in the kitchen** since its presence does not let them take events seriously. They spend more time in the kitchen together preparing dinner and even food for their lunch next day. Since getting this, they even spend less time watching their favourite TV soap opera. They feel the presence of their parents in the kitchen as if they are living with them. They are thinking of inviting friends over and presenting the MO to them so that maybe they can come up with more useful ideas.



The diet checker for empty nests

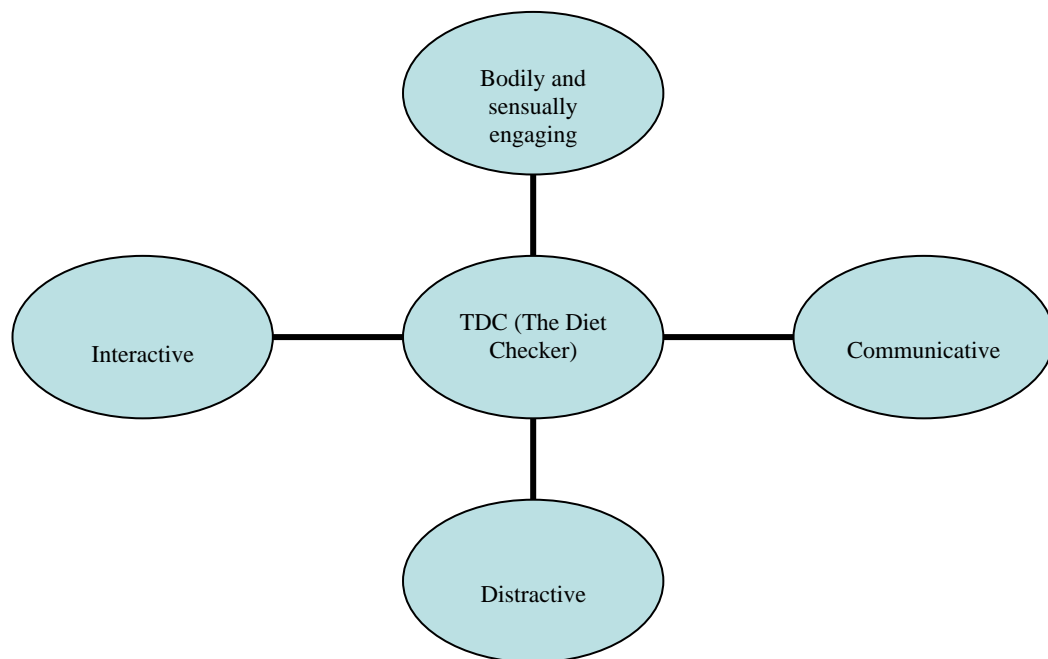
Although national reports have claimed that ‘manufacturers and retailers of convenience foods are failing to attract their share of older shoppers’ as this group prefers ‘to cook their evening meals from scratch’ (Intel, 2009), not all of them eat as well and the kinds of nutritious food that they should. The number of people aged 65 and over is going to rise by nearly 50% in the next 20 years to over 16 million. (*Office for National Statistics*, 2011; Age UK, 2013) and unfortunately, the latest statistics ‘suggest 1.3 million people over 65 suffer from malnutrition, and the vast majority (93%) live in the community’ (Age UK, 2013).

In the story of Moira and Arthur, some of these concerns are illustrated and an interactive device is suggested that facilitates remote communication, brings a vibrant atmosphere to the kitchen living space, and functions as a guide for a healthier diet.

Moira and Arthur live in Edinburgh and have been married happily for 45 years. Moira is 68 and Arthur is 77. They have three children. Their two daughters, Jane and Kathleen, moved to Canada 18 and 25 years ago respectively and started their own families there. Moira and Arthur miss them a lot but the presence and care of David, their only son, means they don’t dwell much on the absence of their daughters and their beloved grandchildren. David is 28 and works as an engineer in an international company. His office is just two streets away from the parents’ house. Although David does not live with them, it has always been easy for him to drop by and visit them. David is particularly addicted to Moira’s baking and every time he visits, he takes home some bread and cookies. Recently, Moira was diagnosed as having osteoporosis and she has to be careful about what she eats, so she gets the **best nutrition** she can from it, and the activities she does at home. Part of David’s job is **to check that his parents are eating well** and especially, to prevent his mother from overworking. She spends a lot of time baking and cleaning. David’s care seems to be helpful but at work he is offered a new position and has to move to Oman for a new project. For at least three months he will not be able to visit them. David thinks his parents will not be able to look after themselves, especially now that both need to follow **special diets**. He is sure that as soon as he leaves Edinburgh, both of them will miss David and

perhaps neglect their diets. This preoccupied him until a colleague, Jim, asked him why he was looking so depressed. Jim had an idea. He recently heard of a newly available **communicative device** for **older people** whose children are living far away from them. Maybe this could be the solution to his parents' problem.

The Diet Checker is a **multi-function device** with a **straightforward manual**. It is not just a push button machine but is **physically and sensually engaging**. It reminds Moira and Arthur of the time when their daughters were younger, living with them and there was a **vibrant atmosphere** in the kitchen. This device brought some harmony and focus in to their kitchen. They love to show their friends how it works and enjoy the discussions it has raised.



TDC's specifications:

- Interactive: responsive to the needs and behaviours.
- Communicative: facilitates communication and distance relationships.
- Distractive: engages emotions and provides a vibrant atmosphere in the environment of the kitchen.
- Bodily and sensually engaging: not a push button device, responsive to more tangible actions.

The Weight Spotter

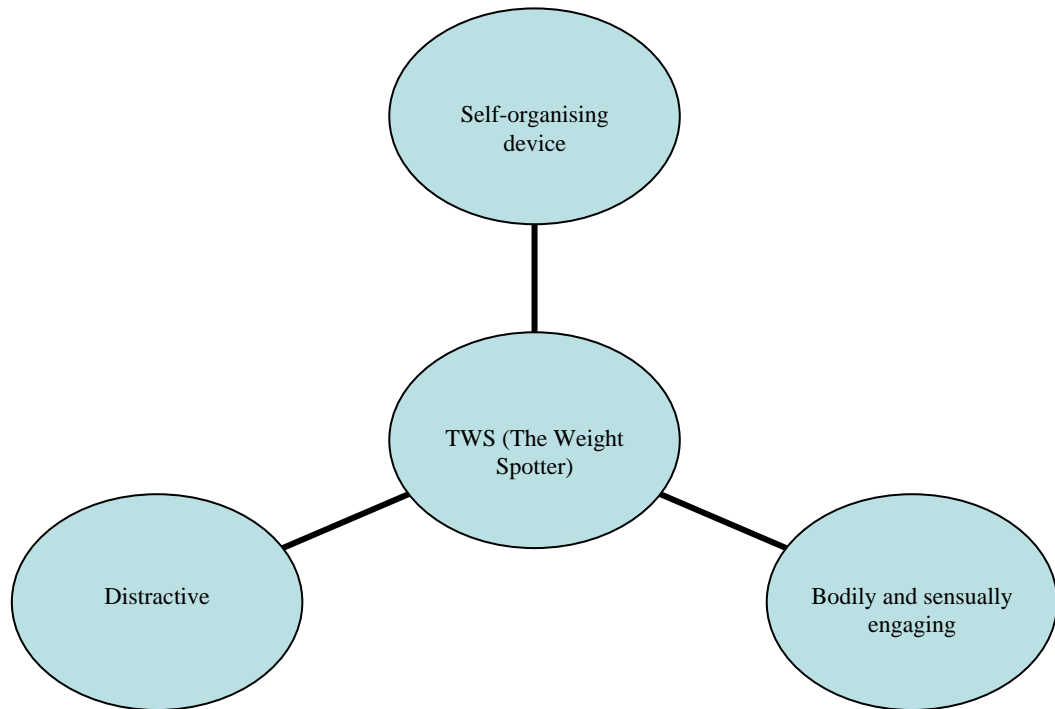
Obesity is another issue that threatens the young generation in the UK, according to statistics (Mitskavets, 2012). Millions of pounds are spent annually to advise against, prevent and treat obesity. In the following design scenario, an overweight person is helped by using a device that has been designed and is based on LAoI. Janet is 28. She is single and lives with two other girls, Helen and Anne, in a shared flat. Janet is a nurse. She has been promoted to nursing officer for two years which involves writing more reports and she has little time for much physical activity. As a result, she has put on a lot of weight and recently has been suffering from pain in her right knee. Her GP advised her to lose 15 kilograms. As a result, she needs to reduce her calorie intake by 1300 calories a day for three months. Then she has to be careful about her carbohydrate, sugar and fat intake. She started on a low carbohydrate **diet** but the result was unsatisfactory. She faced some problems, for example, when she is eating in **the company of her friends** or flatmates, she eats more and could not keep to the diet. She also found most low calorie recipes tasteless, so she would like to make them tastier without increasing the number of calories. But it is not easy and she does not have any **confidence to experiment and be creative**. She has noticed that when she is in a **bad mood** she eats more and consequently, the feeling of guilt makes things even worse for her.

The other thing that can help Janet to keep to a **healthier diet** is by avoiding food late **in the evening**. Then she needs a **reminder** or **entertainment to distract** her from taking food **after 7pm**. In practice, she found it very difficult to stick to not eating late, especially if she was **out with friends**.

Recently, her flatmate, Helen, bought traditional kitchen scales. It is fun using them. She has to weigh vegetables, fruits, rice, bread and flour. Her own digital scale is working properly but dealing with **digits is boring and abstract**. So she prefers to work with Helen's manual scale. Knowing her interest in the manual scale leads Helen and Anne to think of buying a new device, The Weight Spotter (TWS), to help Janet to overcome her obesity. TWS is something **engaging**, similar to the scale which can be useful in the kitchen for different purposes.

TWS is a **self-aid device** to stop people from eating unhealthy food. It gives the user the

pleasure of **organising their time** and preparing **healthy food** at home or even outdoors. It helps them to use and understand better the food traffic-light, colour coding system and other food labelling. It is not just a preventive, it is an **engaging device** each time Janet uses it, and it catches the attention of her friends and they ask her to give them the chance to play with as if it is a **toy**. Besides this distractive quality, it is **physically interactive**. Using it manually requires physical and mental effort that **immerses** Janet fully and is in contrast to her job at work.



TWS's specifications:

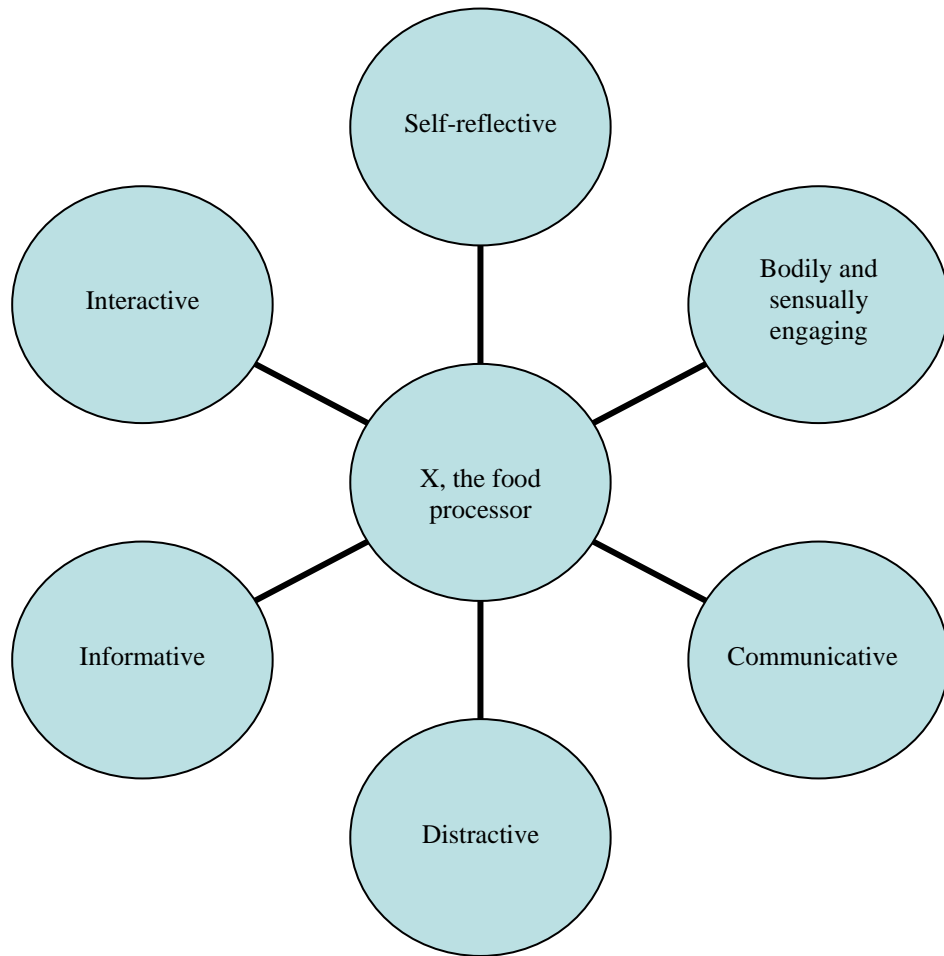
- Self-organising device: time organiser and self-aid machine.
- Bodily and sensually engaging: application of manual technologies.
- Distractive: emotionally engaging and functions to change bad moods.

The food processor for a girl who could not eat

Raising a healthier, younger generation is crucial to society, especially teenagers who are at a critical stage of their life and struggling with different psychological demands and ethical challenges. These pressures make parents feel worried and helpless sometimes. In this scenario, I demonstrated a difficult situation a family faced with regard to their teenage daughter and how product design can suggest a solution. Lily's parents are tired and furious. They think their 16-year-old daughter does not eat enough food and recently, she has become very obsessed with her body image and worries about body fat. A few days ago, Lily's friend, Amber, was on the news because of her severe malnutrition as a result of anorexia, an eating disorder common among young girls. Anorexia stems from a fear of being fat. Amber has to be in hospital for at least four months and might have other health problems in the future. She stopped going to school a month ago as she was feeling poorly all the time and could not concentrate. Her situation makes a lot of parents in the school worried for their children including Lily's. They do not know what to do. There should be a solution that convinces these girls to eat while lessening the pressure of becoming overweight and not being able to fit into their clothes or going up a size.

Lily's parents hope that by acquiring X, which is an engaging food processor, it will help their daughter to overcome her anxiety and she can acquire better eating habits and gain the nutrition she needs.

After using it for a while, X has a bold presence in their home. Lily spends more time in the kitchen and has gained more knowledge about different foods and their quality and nutrition. X is **interactive** and **bodily and sensually** engaging. It lets Lily use her creativity and imagination to make her favourite food without being worried about gaining weight. It helps all the family members **communicate** better and have more quality time in the kitchen. Lily now wittily **introduces herself** as Generation X.



TFP's specifications:

- Interactive: based on new interactive technologies.
- Informative: provides information about healthier diets and has educational purposes.
- Communicative: facilitates family communications.
- Distractive: distracts the users from food obsessions.
- Bodily and sensually engaging: encourages physical activities and stimulates all senses.
- Self-reflective: advocates personal and creative agendas.

6 Conclusion

In the pursuit of playfulness in product design I have focussed on the everyday practices of the users and drawn upon theoretical perspectives from other related disciplines such as anthropology and the social sciences. The questions raised by this research concerned playful engagements in relation to: objectivity versus subjectivity; the role of the users; functionality versus playability; establishing an inclusive framework of LAoI, and finally, the phenomenon of the ludification of societies and cultural transformation.

Through this interrogation of theory and practice, I have demonstrated that despite an increased use of the term ‘playful’ in product design, the meaning of the term remains vague and there is as yet no definitive agreement among design researchers and critics regarding the definition. Hence, my research represents the first time that playfulness has been the focus of a product-design oriented research project, drawing upon findings in other disciplines such as philosophy, media and game studies to attempt to analyse and interpret playfulness in product design.

The main lines of enquiry of this research have been exploratory and interpretive in nature and my aim was to outline the chief concerns and provide a deeper understanding of the issue of playfulness in product design. Therefore, I did not intend to solve a problem, test out a theory, or generalise an issue. My main objective was to understand how play can become an essential, embodied part of a product rather than a tagged-on extra. As a result of this exploration, I discovered that playfulness tended to be defined in close relation to the user’s interactions with products and it contributes to the construction of a new form of identity known as playful identity. The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that assigning any attribute of playfulness to a product without considering the contribution of the user, the socio-cultural environment of use and more reflective and constructive users’ interactions with products will be reductive and superficial. I believe that my research has established that playfulness in a product is not about an emotion elicited from using that product but rather it is a mode which can be chosen prior to utilitarian function.

Throughout this study, I have explored the potential of play, its value and beauty which resulted in introducing a new framework to study ludic or playful interactions; LAoI. This is important because LAoI draws attention to the parameters that designers should consider in presenting their playful ideas and help them to reinforce more meaningful interactions with products. My exploration of the realm of playfulness also leads to my creating a taxonomy of playful products which is the key contribution made by this research, providing a broad spectrum of play, from visually and functionally playful, to more subtle and hidden agendas, which only can be highlighted through the active role of users.

I drew out the key elements of playful interactions from everyday interactions with products that cut across my fieldwork in the kitchens and demonstrated how users come into consideration, how they define playfulness and how they can operate actively in presenting the fun-led kitchen as opposed to the food-led kitchen. As observed and discussed when analysing the data and the discussion of the ethnographic studies, Chapter 4, page 175, kitchen practices in relation to products, the environment of the kitchen, its appliances and the user all had a role in contributing to playful interactions.

Objective versus subjective elements of playful artefacts

Identifying the objective and subjective elements of playfulness was crucial to the definition of playfulness in product design. These elements were discussed in all stages of this research: in academic arguments, the taxonomy of playfulness, the works of students at Edinburgh College of Art and finally, in the ethnographic studies of the kitchen.

In my initial study of play in products, the literature directed me through the more perceptual and emotional aspects of playful products. Scholars such as Norman believe attractive objects work better, reinforcing the visual seduction and the appropriateness of attractive and playful products for domestic use rather than official use. Visual attractiveness in Alessi products was dubbed as playful in some reviews, and mostly with regard to the *Family Follows Fiction* series but these products suggest passive interactions and superficial playfulness. Gradually, by

acknowledging the broad definition of the concept of play, I was directed to more subtle aspects of play which are difficult to define by only their visual attributes, for instance, designed artefacts by Droog Design. As outlined in Chapter 2, page 88, Droog's products are considered playful due to more subjective agendas such as their hidden meanings, unusual appearances, provoking surprise in the context of use and in some of the bodily engagements they offer. Moving from market studies to the more academic milieu, experimental design projects were identified that supported unfamiliar definitions of play, such as ambiguity and openness. The open-ended functions in the designs of Gaver and his followers support the idea of playful engagements in product design. Openness, along with ambiguity in the product, offers different interpretation and meanings for functions based on individuals' experiences, skills and perception. The ambiguity can start with the form of an object by postponing the cognition, but as an agreed characteristic of play, it embraces subjective playful interactions and provides the chance for the individual's playful moments. These studies led me to develop the taxonomy of playful products which posit playful products according to two parameters of playful form (more emphasis on visual engagements) and function (more physical and improvised engagements). In this way, I was able to demonstrate a range of products which starts from objective playful characteristics to subjective ones (Table 5-1, page 197). The other aspect explored in the taxonomy of playful products (Chapter 2) was recognising that a sort of play can exist with everyday products designed without any playful intentions, however, they have a potential to be used in a playful mode. I referred to this category of playful products as 'affording play'.

Moving from this theoretical categorisation to fieldwork, I was challenged by a series of artefacts designed by product design students at ECA, which implicitly demonstrated playful characteristics. The playfulness in these artefacts had not been mentioned in the aims of the design by the students, however on the second and third level of interactions, one could clearly see the playful engagements. In addition, I explored how students' designs for interaction lead to communication, emotion and the experience of play (Diagram 4-1). At this stage, I demonstrated how the

emotional element of surprise, creativity and novelty in use and entertainment contribute to playful characteristics of these designed products (Table 4-2).

In the next phase of fieldwork, my attempts to open any discussion about the playful aspect of products and kitchen practices with the older group of women were ineffective. Their definition of playful products was limited to a joy from well designed functional products, the idea of a fitted kitchen and the nostalgia of baking with their young children. Instead, in my ethnographic observations and interviews with the younger group of women, they showed an enthusiasm for play in regard to kitchen practices. The specific appliances reviewed in Chapter 2 were not observed in their kitchens, but as an alternative, the ordinary appliances present the agenda for a kind of subjective playfulness. This assumption was well matched with the fourth category in the taxonomy of playful products, affording play. Accordingly, the subjective elements posed a play mode as opposed to a function mode in the interaction with the products, for example, chopping vegetables in a certain way and size, and baking as a deliberate form of fun in the kitchen. Both represented *paidia* and not *ludus* as defined by Caillois, a combination of *ilinx* (vertigo) and mimicry (simulation) types of play. Yielding yourself to the fun side of events in the kitchen, winning or losing is not an important element as there is no competition and players always have another chance to replay the task, therefore improvising and arbitrary acting dominate rule-based modes of play.

The retro-design trend depicted in the interviews with the younger group of women speaks of another objective and subjective sort of play which occurs with a sense of an implied history. The specific visual features of retro forms elicit a historical and cultural context which in the hand of the user playfully represents her taste, nostalgia and the value of the aesthetics of the past time.

One of the most significant findings to emerge from this study is that while play in academic studies tries to find its root in digital technologies, this study has shown that play is not restricted to the world of new technologies, and in practice, the end-users creatively construct their own definition of play, mode of play and even the manual technology associated with the past became an agenda for play.

As noted by many researchers in product design, aesthetics goes beyond the beauty of appearance and has shifted from visual qualities to more subjective elements, such as attention given to different senses and the holistic approach to sensory engagement, personal and cultural interpretations of beauty and the beauty in usability. For example, in AoI, visual characteristics have not been mentioned and could only be defined in users' interests. However, as mentioned in LAoI, beauty in playful interactions is reinforced by the bodily engaging characteristics. Playful interactions can be experienced through physical interactions involving mind and body coordination, such as chopping foods to a certain size and form, weighing potatoes on old scales, whisking, and using a manual mixer, squeezing a lemon by hand or using a pasta maker.

The empirical findings in this study provide a new understanding of playful engagement. The emphasis on beauty, joy and excitement elicited from the visual characteristic of products (which is passive) is expanded into the more active and engaging processes that are involved in playfulness. Norman (2002) once commented that 'attractive things work better' and I would add that the disappointment from a malfunctioning attractive object is often keenly felt. Nevertheless, as evidenced in my interviews, the Alessi series of *Family Follows Function* was found attractive but was not convincing enough for the individuals to purchase and use. So it is clear that users are not seduced by just the appearance of toy-shaped products and are capable of understanding and contributing to more subjective sorts of playfulness in products.

The role of users in terms of the functionality of, and playability and re-playability in, kitchen appliances

In borrowing the terms 'playability' and 're-playability' from game and new media studies, it allowed me to explain better some aspects of playful products with regard to functionality. As mentioned in the literature review, playability is defined in relation to the player's attitudes, skills and expectations. In order to design a playfully engaging product, playability will be the different level of engagements one experiences through time and usage. This quality motivates the user to have deeper and longer lasting interactions with a product, which needs to be compatible to

his/her skills, past experiences and interests. As argued in several discussions throughout this thesis (see p.70, p.71, p.216), playability is a quality which functional appliances can occasionally afford and is capable of going beyond the assigned functions of products. As was clear from the student projects *The Interactive Drawer* and *The Music Resonance Maker*, one can perceive these artefacts through different levels of playful engagement, which was not anticipated in the initial designs, but took place after examining and using the product through time. Similarly, playability can be very close to what I previously called ‘affording play’ in the taxonomy of products, as observed in the usage of the whisk, measuring cups and the scales (p.153, pp.196-199).

The re-playability that I have identified in this research, therefore, assists in the understanding of affections for retro design and recalling past objects. I observed that my informants were attracted to retro styles and took the benefits from the old items, putting them to use in new contexts. Products such as the cast-iron scales were an example of this. As explained before, it is not only the user who creatively tries to elicit play out of old products but it is also the designer’s aim. Reintroducing the products of an older time through designing in a retro style is popular and sells. Through the new production of the Aga cooker, Kenwood chefs, among others, demonstrate this interest. The Aga cooker’s continuation of its retro style made it a desirable iconic object in the context of British urban housing, such that it is not only used in country cottage houses.

All in all, the playful quality of products is not limited to objective attributes such as the visual aspects or sensory engagements, but through creative usage of appliances, taking benefits from the range of functionalities they afford, and sometimes, a subjective playful engagement which can be highlighted by socio-cultural or historical contexts.

Ludo-aesthetics of interaction: a theoretical framework in defining the playful aspects of products and design practices

One of the aims of this research was to evaluate the adequacy of current frameworks used in product design for defining the playfulness interaction. The theoretical

framework developed here for LAoI extends the earlier work of Hummels on AoI, which was not able to convey different aspects of playfulness. The framework of LAoI also draws on more recent work on playful identity and the ludification of society by De Mul and De Lange (2005, 2010). Whilst adopting Hummels' and Overbeeke's belief in the aesthetics of interaction and beauty in interaction, I believe the essential part of my framework is in expanding the philosophy to fully convey the beauty of playfulness.

Beauty in playful interactions follows the same principles in AoI. It is not about visual attraction, but rather, it is a sort of beauty that is evoked through the joy elicited from physical and bodily interactions with a product, the communicative possibilities a product provides, the immersion one experiences during use, and finally, a reflexive quality which nourishes the playful being and self, compatible with playful aspects of the contemporary mediated world. Obviously, as argued, the only objective quality observed and studied in the work of other academic researchers was the physical and bodily or sensory engagements, and the other aspects were more subjective and implicit. In the literature review, the physical engagement which leads to playful interaction was discussed in the case of Norman's tilting tea pot and the Alessi *Lilliput* salt and pepper set. Similarly, in the fieldwork, it was observed that listening to music, chopping, whisking, playing with the different heating compartments of the Aga cooker and using the old-fashioned scales can be bodily engaging whilst promoting playfulness.

As I have argued, the emerging ludic culture of today and the assumption of a human being as *homo ludens* is part of the framework of LAoI. Based on the research undertaken for this PhD, it is my belief that designers, in order to enhance the material culture, should consider this aspect of individuals in modern societies and then advocate playful products. Moreover, I would contend that the role of ludo-aesthetic interactions should be given more prominence by designers as a useful tool with which they will be able to provide us with more engaging and enjoyable moments in the kitchens and enhance our social life and wellbeing.

Playful engagements in product design contribute to the 'ludification of societies' and vice versa

The findings of this study suggest that the usage of the kitchen by a group is closely connected to the idea of ludic identity. This identity is affiliated to the ludification of societies and the kitchen provides an environment for users to reconstruct their identity freely and playfully (Table 5-3). It is only through the ludic culture of the present that my informants were able to define themselves in relation to others and the environment of the kitchen.

The evidence from this study demonstrates that it is not possible to put much emphasis on the product itself to define playfulness, as I was unaware of any artefacts explicitly suggesting play in the kitchen of the informants. However, I observed a different attitude towards cooking practices and appliances in the younger generation that was not evident among the older generation. The 'means to an end' assumption of the kitchen, whereby its playful and vibrant quality is often connected to the presence of young children, has changed to a multi-purpose place. This kitchen can be used for socialising, impressing others by performing and showing cooking and baking practices and skills, relaxing and caring for oneself, storing the memories of the past and having fun over the sharing of food.

Accordingly, I would argue that it is the fun-led kitchen instead of the food-led kitchen which can demonstrate the cultural transformation of ludic-ness. As described throughout the design scenarios in the previous chapter, product design can embrace play to enrich the experience of kitchen activities, transfer them into pleasurable and enjoyable events and encourage a broader range of people to spend more time in the kitchen. The social being of people today can be nourished through everyday playful activities. By limiting the kitchen to a meal machine, we reduce this experience to a boring and unpleasant activity which not only stops people from having and enjoying homemade meals with fresh and healthy ingredients, but also diminishes cooking skills and disconnects the transmission of such skills to the future generation.

Limitations and future research

A number of important limitations need to be considered in this study. First, the playful practices I observed were limited to the domestic environment of the kitchen. Obviously, by choosing other environments in the house or even more public spaces, such as offices or outdoor spaces, the emphasis would have been shifted to different aspects of playful engagements. Second, the study was conducted with a small sample size and caution must be applied as the findings might not be transferable to any other groups and community. As the aim was inductive, the outcome needs to be tested before coming to any theory or generalisation.

This study has provided a better understanding of the playful engagements possible in the environment of the domestic kitchen. As a part of such engagements is very personal and hidden from observers, I propose to use research methods which support the invisible presence of the researcher in further studies.

A considerable amount of work will need to be done to test the aspects of the proposed framework of LAoI. The scenarios developed here are a good start and have expanded to investigate potential products or systems based on the capacity of ludo-aesthetic interaction, as they aimed to visualise real situations with real people.

This research has rendered some questions in need of further investigation. Therefore, the future prospect of this research can be defined by an enquiry into the relationship between playability and sustainability and how playability leads us to sustainability. Playable objects are assumed to have a longer effect on the users and provide attachment with the user. Re-playability, in terms of recalling and reusing past objects, which was demonstrated in retro style, can be part of a sustainable approach in further studies.

The focus of this research was mainly on women, as their habits of eating have a more direct and immediate impact on the health of society. It is true that without the support of family, and all members of the community and society, healthy diets would not be achievable. However, young women are seen as future mothers and responsible for the health of their future children. With this being the main concern,

my research limited me from gaining more insight into men. It is reported that ‘men are more likely than women to eat out suggesting that it is a direct substitute for home cooking’ (Mintel, 2009). This could be an enquiry for future research.

The fun-led kitchen and the next generation

While writing these final paragraphs, as a member of the Food Revolution Day Group, I received a congratulatory email, ‘Happy Food Revolution Day’ (16th of May 2014). Jamie Oliver’s annual Food Revolution Day has the motto, ‘Cook it, Share it, Live it’ (Figure 6-1) and aims to celebrate cookery skills.



Figure 6-1: Food revolution's three simple actions: cook it, share it, live it

However, it makes me wonder if the slogan is strong enough to challenge the fast food and restaurant industry who rely on counter-mottos, such as ‘don’t cook, just eat’ which often appears on restaurant doors¹(Figure 6-2). If everyone can remember a day when they were so into play that they forgot to eat, then why not design to combine playing and eating? I would, therefore, like to propose a modification to Jamie Oliver’s approach in order to make it a real challenge: ‘Play it, Cook it, Share it, Live it’.

¹ Just eat is an online service which provide easy orders from takeaways and restaurants for customers by asking their postcode and the food they want to eat.



Figure 6-2: The logo of ‘Just eat’ which can be seen on the door of some takeaways and restaurants and one of the web advertisements for Just eat services in 2014

In summary, referring to the theory of the ‘ludification of societies’, this research examined the role and position of product design in making a playful environment reinforced by playful actors. As the study of the students’ projects at ECA demonstrates, along with other academic efforts to establish more open-ended products, it is expected that a new interactive generation of products will come into existence that offer more opportunities to play for individuals. As was observed through the examples in this thesis, new media technologies became the agents of experimental design projects at university level across Europe. These projects are set in a way to question environmental issues, meanings of time and place and playfully

raise philosophical concerns about who we are and want to be. Playfulness has a close relationship with new media technologies and finds its way to become the inherited quality of them. Whilst design researchers such as Gaver and his followers, under the shadow of ludic culture, advocate playfulness through the lens of new media technologies, my ethnographic fieldwork highlighted that playfulness is not limited to digital and new technology developments or any other push button applications, instead, play can be found in old objects and manual technologies as long as they become an agent for communicative, physical, bodily and self-constructive interactions. The new framework of LAoI is set out to explain such qualities. In addition, I have demonstrated playfulness can occur through recalling the objects of the past, the culture of reusing and recycling, and retro style.

In conclusion, I would again assert that the design of the future kitchen and its appliances needs to embrace playfulness, and acknowledge the new playful actors, *homines ludentes*, in order to expand the kitchen experiences and create a more inclusive vibrant environment for more people. I call this new approach to the kitchen ‘the fun-led kitchen’ and believe in the constructive role of play in humans’ interactions with products. Playful design has the potential to bring more joy and fun to the kitchen, change the passive habit of consuming ready and convenient meals, lead people to have a more active role in cooking practices, share more homemade and healthy food and has the ability to ensure that this cooking culture is transferred to the next generation.

‘Man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays.’ (Schiller et al., 1967, p.107)

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Appendices

APPENDIX I

The transcript of interviews with product design students at Edinburgh College of Art:

Aimee

What does your piece do?

It's to improve the life of someone who is becoming increasingly immobile. Whether it be at home or in a retirement home or in hospital. I chose the everyday ritual of drinking tea because most people, especially older people like to relax and have an enjoyable cup of tea.

And how do you explain the function of this? How does it work?

A tray like you would normally have but you can attach audio postcards from your family and friends to it using computer technology. So your music's there, which connects up with headphones. It's actually by an LDR which is a light-dependent resistor and when the teacup's placed on the tray and then lifted, the audio plays through the tray...and you can record anything onto it, it's quite basic. So may music or your voice. Record it by family or friends.

How important is the function of this product to you? How do you explain the function in terms of the aim you have and the functions currently?

At the moment I'm focusing more on making it, trying to contrast from the things that we already have in our lives that are very functional looking. So although it has a function it has also got to be enjoyable, look good and not look clinical in any way. More like something you treasure and can be passed down. That you would want to keep so it doesn't just get confused with any function that's clinical... It is important to relate it to your home life.

If you want to give a priority to different functions of the product, how do you explain this?

The main function is to improve the person's quality of life. The secondary function might be to keep the person entertained if they can't go out. To make things easier as well. It's a combined gadget. It's got two things in one by having the function of holding the tea and ...

A kind of multifunctional tray. Any more when you deployed...?

I should have said...it is to allow people in hospital to feel more alive. Because everything in hospital is dictated by your medication, doctors and also visiting hours are very restricted and everything...

The second one is about what other things your product, your family, friends; they might have some expressions of your product...beyond your own aim, you know, beyond what you are thinking of...

For Gran definitely it would help her feel more alive. She also said that although it kept technology within it...there was a lot of new technology...it was easy to use...

User friendly?

Yeah. A lot of people want to be able to use new tech but don't know how to. She also said that it would be a good to have if in a retirement home everyone had one, instead of existing things. And it meant, like, that if other people got postcards and stuff from their family once you have finished you can pass it on.

What would you change about the function of the thing?

I think, if I was remaking it, I would make the cup smaller. It's not very strong now. Having a larger cup and saucer makes it harder to pick up. And also I didn't realise that if I was picking up a cup I wouldn't pick up both, I would pick up just the cup and not the saucer, but my gran would pick up both...when you pick up both it just stops and you have to hold it continuously until the end of the track.

You know when you wanted to combine this something very ordinary like the tray with something very different, like having audio, I mean, ... how important is using something very ordinary for this combination? Why did you choose the tray and then add something else to it?

I think it's because so many things are quite ordinary. For people who don't really get out much they don't have very much excitement really, but it is bringing special into something that you do everyday which is quite relaxing And it is quite enjoyable anyway, but having your family's voices and stuff like that can help, really. I think finding something in a person's life that is already quite special, I wanted to differentiate from other things by taking something essential and improving on it. It is really about improving something, finding something that is already good and adding something to it.

Thank you. The last one is why do you think that your piece is unique or different in terms of the products on the market or if you compare with your friends' projects on the course?

I don't really think there's anything like it. It's difficult to know. People are quite often left on their own and their family don't always visit them. I don't really like to think about that, but it's kind of true. That's why it's kind of different as well. Something about your family all having a major part in it from the beginning. If they have a part in it from the beginning, most products are generic but then they bring something. Having the family involved in it right from the beginning means it is a lot more personal.

I know it's difficult to put into words... . It's quite personal to me, as well, because it's for someone I know, so I have quite a good foundation to work because I talk to her and I know what her life's like and I've done some research on other people that may be in that situation...I don't know if that makes sense?

I think it's important to have some sort of connection for the person you are designing for. Otherwise it's difficult to design something that they actually need or actually want if you have no idea what the person's life is like.

True. Thank you.

Helen

What does the product do? What is the function of your product?

My product is a wireless ...mobile speaker for your mobile phone and it's a block of circular wood that you talk to rather than just holding a phone to your ear, you've got this physical object that you talk to. It's just to give a presence really of the other person on the phone.

How do you explain the function of this product? How does it work?

It works via Bluetooth, so you've got your mobile phone, which connects, to the speaker and then it's a loud speaker so their voice comes through the wooden object and you talk to the object through a microphone in it as well.

How important is the function of the product to you I mean when you thought of designing this object and how did you initially think of this function?

Erm...I didn't initially want it to be a speaker. I wanted to make a phone call more realistic to understand ...really surround sound so you could imagine the person being there. But due to tech being quite expensive it had to become a speaker, But I think the most important bit is the object itself, like the shape of it, how you use it and how you grow a bond with it.

You needed to change your design because of the technology?

I did, yeah. I needed to make a simpler version of the technology.

What made you think of this? Was it personal?

No, it comes from, I was looking at illusion that was my first top then I was given the brief that it had to be a sound product about sound so then I was looking at sound illusions. And then that made me think of when you are on the phone you can't really picture what the other person's doing because it's really basic sound and I thought if there was a more enhanced way of hearing them, you'd have more of a mental image and an illusion of that person.

So can you show by this diagram, the main function of the product and other functions in the design or deployment?

The main function would be for people who live away from their family or their partner. They've got this object that represents them. And they can speak to it and grow a bond with the object. So the main function is helping them to be happy and feel as if they're still part of their life. Secondary function would be to have a better quality phone conversation with better quality sound. That hasn't really been done they are all poor quality. I think it's better quality through the speaker.

Other functions...kind of going against all the phones that are out...a bit more of a statement. Something different and because it's made of wood it's got a certain quality that all plastic and metal phones don't have it's a warmer and much more friendly object.

During deployment, did you encounter any other different uses?

No not really people only used it for what it was. But...erm...I think the thing they did really use it for was just an ornament. They used it to show it off. It wasn't just used as a phone because it was something more of a sculpture they used it more as an ornament.

What were different opinions and what did your friends and family think of this piece?

Well, the first positive is that it was a contradiction to what they've already got and it was something that is a lot prettier to look at than a normal phone. The shape and the material. And I think the size of it...I think they liked having something a lot bigger than a normal phone. Erm...one thing that wasn't liked was how heavy it was 'cause its meant to be mobile, you carry it around with you...erm...it was quite heavy because it was a solid piece of wood which limited its mobility. People said it did work for its purpose it was a physical presence, something for you to talk to. One person did say that he didn't think it represented a person or the person on the other end of the phone. It didn't represent them, but it was just something nice to look at and hold and talk to.

Your product is a functional and an art object...

Yeah, definitely.

A really nice combination.

And that wasn't particularly my intention but it's come out that way, which is good. Like I didn't think people would start using it as an ornament, really...erm, like, as statement piece in the home. Like one person had it on the coffee table and kept it there, so it's like a nice thing to look at as well. Whereas, a lot of house phones and mobile phones are just kept on the side or, you know, hidden a bit. Because they're not pretty and, you know, really technology based, and this piece takes all that away. There's no buttons. They're all inside. You open it up and turn it on inside, so it is just a block of wood and I think that that's quite a nice thing.

That leads to my next question, which is about why your piece is unique or different?

Yeah, because it doesn't look like technology. I think it's also different just because of its size. One of the people I tested it on pointed out that phones are getting smaller and smaller and I don't think there is a good reason for that maybe it is the mobility thing and this is an object that you would keep in your home. But the smaller and lighter the object the less presence it has so thing that I've designed is big enough and heavy enough to have a physical presence in a room, which a person would have if they were there. I think it's also different because of the material. I've never seen a wooden phone. They're all pretty much the same material. It's completely different from any other phone I've ever seen.

How does it compare to your friends' projects? How would you define the characteristics of your own design?

Erm...I think mine's a lot more personal. It's all about emotional attachment and emotional design. So I looked into people who lived away from their husbands or wives

and tried to help them. It's more of a personal thing so it's not all about the object and how it works. It's about the object and the emotional attachment they have with it.

Thank you very much.

Jessica

What does the product you have designed do?

I wanted to transform the toilet experience from a necessity to something you can enjoy, that you can play with rather than being something you need to. So change the experience of going to the toilet, especially to the public toilet.

What's it called?

It's called Toilet Megaphone because there's a phone inside and because it magnifies the sound.

How does this work?

First by mobile technology. There are basically mobile phones inside that have very good sound quality. I am using the Sony Eriksson Walkman series of mobile phone. They have a memory card where you can put the music and the sound quality is quite good as well.

If you want to give a priority of the function of your product how do you prioritise it, for e.g. the main function of your product and so on?

I started by wanting to make enjoyable moments like... ..part of the function is to surprise the user because they are going to be leaflets outside the toilets so that people who are waiting for the toilet can use it to surprise the person inside and the music loaded is quite funny, like rock music that talks about smells. Like, both the people that are waiting for the toilet and people who are in the toilet.

So is the product about public places?

It's going to be played in Pizza Express in the staff toilets because the restaurant toilet is in the basement and there is no access to the network there. I wanted to put it in the main toilets but my mobiles weren't working. It's good as well because I can record my workmates' phone numbers so everybody can choose different songs. When you actually phone there is going to be a specific sound for each person. So the person phoning can make a surprise...

And it should be easier when you want to collect data?

Yes. You can text with a request, so I can record that number with a specific tune that can choose so you just need to send a text and then...you can decide what kind of music you want and you can choose how many tunes you want to put. And by texting as well the music will be different so...

Is this something that you found during the process of designing or not?

At the beginning it was something completely different. At the beginning I wanted to make a toilet seat that was going to detect the movement and play without you doing anything. But I found it very difficult to get a hold of the technology. I had to change

it because my knowledge was not enough so I had to compromise and change it completely, basically, because a toilet is a difficult situation because of the hygiene. Nobody wants to touch it. They want to touch as little as possible when they go to public toilets. It had to be activated by something that, you know, like a mobile phone or your feet, but as well on the floor it had to be waterproof. There were many options. And then after encountering many, many problems...

Can you think of any more functionality?

Personalised, no. There are people who play games or do crosswords or read magazines while they are in the toilet. They could listen to music...

Hmm....Change the idea of toilets. As they are not pleasant places.

Ok, thank you. In your opinion, how do they perceive this product?

When I was explaining this to my colleagues some people were surprised and they were laughing at the idea of music in the toilets. Not taking it seriously. As well they didn't understand why you would do that and the fact that because at the beginning my idea was toilet seats and then they were like why were you going to make a toilet seat?

Any positive feedback?

There was one girl, she told me she went to this...erm...public toilet in a park. Music in the park was very bad but then she went to the toilet and it was quite strange but there was very nice music, much better!

Finally, your device has the same function?

Yeah.

People were very serious when I told them about it...

Why do you think they were serious?

Because toilets are like a taboo. You know people don't usually talk about toilets. They joke about toilets they find it funny or embarrassing, it's not a subject that people want to talk about usually they try to hide it. It's an awkward place to do designs. All these issues such as hygiene and like...

What made you think about it and choose this taboo?

Because I like a challenge and also because in Italy it is normal that you chat in the toilets. I really enjoy listening music when I use the bathroom. Not just when I go to the toilet but when I have a bath so I put this in the bathroom, so you can enjoy music not just when you go to the toilet but when you have a bath or put on makeup. In Italy a woman stays in the bathroom a lot before she goes out, she does her hair in the bathroom, make up, she gets dressed, everything, so you can spend an hour, so its nice to listen to music. If you go to the toilet just to pee, there is no point. But in a different culture...I am from Seville, Milan...it's a good idea for public toilets is what they told me.

What makes your design unique and different from similar designs or from your flatmates'?

From my flatmates', everybody, got very different products, like...there are music systems for toilets e.g. radios for showers with suction cups and you put them on the wall of the shower but the quality of the sound is very bad and usually bathrooms are very steamy so it is not the right...I bought one to try and the quality is terrible you never find the signal and different because this one you can do what ever you want. Because the mobile is more like... to play for 30 seconds, it is for short noises or if you want to surprise somebody because it doesn't play for a very long time. It is unique because there is not another product...

In terms of audio sounds...?

Because mine is mobile I didn't actually have to create...I took sounds that were already existing and applied them in a different way. The design, it changed quite a lot because in the beginning it was a lot smaller. There was a very nice kind of angel wings shape to it. I kept this for the front but I had to make it much, much bigger. First of all it's not going to be made of wood. If it was mass-produced I would find a different type of technology because this is very expensive: 40, 50 pounds each mobile. It's a good quality mobile. So I would use maybe somebody else like someone more experienced in technology. We had a project, a limited amount of time and one material to use, but [mass-produced] then it would be made in plastic, probably, which would be much cheaper. Like a vacuum mould. Also in public toilet the technology is supposed to be locked so the user doesn't have access to the technology inside, whereas these ones, there is access at the top. But I am putting them in a safe environment where I know the people are not going to steal anything. Otherwise they would need to be locked.

So it might have a different form?

Maybe the form I want to keep it because its meant to look like a megaphone. You have got that shape for a reason, as well, to amplify the sound. And that's another reason why I left it open on the top so you don't have to make any hole in the phone. It's different because it wants to change a necessity into something pleasant

You are engaged in solving problems...

Yeah. Most of the stuff they have got is an existing problem that they have got and changed like for e.g. the vibration...blind people use these foam boards when then sit on top and touch it and can feel people coming toward them or talking to them. Another one is a speaker made of wood another one is a music box.

I think that the main important thing in your work is that you take benefit of existing things and use it in a different way...

Even the shape of the thing there for a reason. That shape will amplify the sound even from outside because it makes the sound much, much bigger.

Thank you.

Maria

Can you explain about your design?

It's a handheld device, which allows people...hopefully to have...different...experience of sounds.

How do you explain the function?

Basically inside there's a speaker and a transistor, so either you can play music or talk into a microphone...

How important is the function of the product to you. Is that the main purpose?

Yes, definitely the purpose. If I had more money I'd make it much, much better but because I didn't have the budget. I didn't really have the funds to do it.

For example, did you have the main function of the design and then after you made it did you think of more functions?

I think initially the idea came from reservation Boards, we use these in music classes. And that started the initial idea and then if somebody's playing drums in the background... the body...before they get to dance and so it was just really interesting I thought...so...

What did you change through the design process?

People I chatted to said these boards were really cumbersome...quite large, not something you could, you know, put in your car or in your home, so I wanted to try and develop something you could use it all the time and also would become a personal object.

When you think of the priority of the functions, what would you say was the primary function and what would be secondary functions? And what, in practice, you encountered?

I wanted the design to feel... the secondary function to eliminate the feeling of isolation so that you...OK...place it in different parts of your home...I didn't really think it would be useful if people could hear it...

Yeah, my advert's all about...something to make her...but that sort of defeats the whole purpose of it...like the shape of it...

Any other ideas of different purposes that other people suggested or you yourself thought of after...?

Well I suppose it made me think about ...and how boring they really are...

The second diagram shows what other people think. Did you mention...the opinions or the feelings or?

I think most people liked the idea but only if it worked and if it did help...I can't really think of any others.

What do you think makes it unique or different from other products, if you compare it with similar products?

I think the unique thing about it is that it is easy. It caters for one specific category of people...

In terms of design? The form?

Yeah, I suppose the shape. Well if I designed it wireless, it would be much better. All the problems with the technology....

Thank you

Fionn

What's the name of your project or your product?

It doesn't really have a name...

What the does product do?

The function is that it plays music. 3 audio inputs that play through the same speaker simultaneously, so essentially you can play three tracks at the same time, or up to 3. The idea is to encourage social interaction.

The first aim was the music function?

No, the first aim was to encourage social interaction, to get people to interact together in public.

So if you wanted to have a priority of functions, for example, what is the core aim?

The core aim would be social interaction.

Why did you choose this?

My last degree was in a very small village and everybody talked to each other, whereas here if you don't talk to anybody at college or in your home life... you employ people rather than...so this is to bring people together or, attempt to...

Makes it different from other music instruments or different functions?

Yeah.

How did you come up with this?

Before, I was looking at a different thing of trying to play products that looks kind of like a piece of furniture or something familiar...but have different sensors on it, that when you press each one it plays literally together...making a musical melody out of what was available. When I trying to play around with that, I you know tried to put three of four inputs into one to see what that was like...so... and then that developed as well into what if people with their iPods played different sounds...

Any other functions?

It clings to lampposts...

...Any other functions? Maybe after deployment you will find some other.

Yeah.

In your opinion, how do others perceive this work, for e.g. your colleagues, your parents, your friends, different types of people?

They really liked it.

Have got some feedback from other...?

Yeah. I've shown my friends, like, but I don't know what they say. One of my friends said that he could see it being used but that it probably wouldn't work...

When they say not work, they mean...?

Music won't mix together.

How about the first aim that you have?

People didn't really...but I'm not very good at explaining things sometimes, so they probably missed the point. Imagine people would say that...erm...

What makes your design different and unique from similar designs or maybe those of your classmates?

Involves more than one person...don't know...not something you really think about...

I think, in terms of communicating, it's a device that can potentially bring people together. I don't think for others this is the case...

Yeah. Louis' does a little bit.

But what makes this different?

I can't really...

As I understand it, it's a kind of simplified model of DJ-ing....

Yeah, really simplified.

So in a way everybody can be a DJ with your device...

Yeah, but on a very basic level. ... But that's kind of something that I don't want it to be as well, because it lacks so much function. Like the real aim is to bring people together rather than DJ, but...

So maybe after you need to add something...? You should be careful what they do and how they interact with it and if it wasn't the case you wanted and it wasn't achieved, your aims, then you can change it a bit...

Yep.

Thank you.

Louis

What is the product's function?

To make people talk to each other more. It could be families or flat mates, maybe people go out at different times in the morning and come back at different times at night, cook their dinner and go back to their room, that's it.

You can record messages to each other and place them in each other's drawer so when you open it, it shows that someone called you or 'you know that song I was talking about' or and it creates a start to a conversation, so you interact with one another.

How does it work?

I used a keyboard that plugs into a USB point. So they are wired up to the back of each drawer so that when you open the drawer....so it plays a diff track that you choose. So when it's open it plays...

How important was the function of the product for you? Was the audio the main purpose of the design?

I think so because audio can be used in different ways. It was thing that was going to bring people together.

Why did you choose drawers?

At first they were going to be functional drawers as well. They were either going to be a chair or drawers. I just made it a solid box. I liked it because they look like drawers but you open them...it's quite transparent design now because you open them and it's as if you are presented with a sound because it's a solid thing and sound.

Your project is interesting for my project because I am thinking about if you take something with a regular function...

Yeah, it becomes something else but it's still ...

What would you say as the main function and what are secondary functions...?

I guess that's what nice about it...it can be used as a voicemail thing, it can be used to play music, to play radio, so you can use it in different ways, so...

Multiple functionality.

In deployment have you noticed any other functions, different uses?

Not so much, but I guess because its linked up to your computer you could play around with it or just use it as speakers you just pull one drawer opens and just leave it. Because the code's quite easy, once you get an understanding of the code you can drag multiple songs in, about 20 songs. So you could just leave one drawer open. Can use this as radio or speaker...

What do others think of your product?

A lot of people like the way it looks. A lot of people thought you should wrap something round it... 'cause the drawers aren't attached yet... could be quite nice...

And their emotions, their general thinking?

I think a lot of people liked it but I don't know if they used it as much for leaving messages for other people. They used it as radio or speakers or radio possibly.

Did they understand the main purpose of the design?

I think so. I didn't tell them exactly how to use it but I told them that they have a drawer and they can leave things in other people's drawer and once they get that, it's quite easy to understand. I didn't tell them exactly how I wanted them to use it. I think once you tell them that it's quite clear.

Did you encounter any playful activity?

Yeah because people leave messages for people when they're not there. Not sure how to put that into words though...

What do you want to say?

It's quite easy to play with. No one mentioned that, but my friends that have used it have come round to my flat and had a shot of it. I think it encourages playfulness.

Why do you think your piece is unique or different from other designs on the market or in comparison with your friends' designs? Is there any of this kind of object on the market?

Not that I have found, no.

If you want to compare with your friends designs what makes your design unique?

Some of them I can see actually existing in the house whereas some of them are a bit more experimental, and people might actually like these in the house.

And about audio quality?

Guess each does something different, whilst this only does a single...

Thank you very much.

Rodney

Can you tell the function of your product?

The function of it is, basically, a way of telling history in a new way. So instead of telling, like, wartime stories or actual history or that sort of thing, it is more of a playful sort of thing on the spot and having people tell you their stories of Arthur's Seat. So it's more relevant for people or more relevant to the time so that someone can tell their story and other people, it may trigger memories in other people, so they can have an interaction with this product. So they can have their own memories and they can also relate them to other people, so they can send me their memories and I can put them on this and other people can hear their stories, sort of thing, so...

How does it work?

Erm...basically it has the ... music thing in it, but basically when you stand in front of it...erm...a sensor triggers a switch and then it just plays a random track. So the person standing in front of it hears a random story from the stories I have and they can sort of...there's a bit on the top where if they want to, they send me their stories too, sort of thing...

You can record your voice in here?

Yep.

How important is the function of the product to you? Your personal experience?

Erm...I'm not sure...err...in a way, in this sort of project I wanted to go down different lines, I had a different sort of direction for it but...erm...it ended up going towards this sort of side of things. It wasn't initially what I wanted to do but...erm...but it just snowballed into this side of things, but...erm...what was the question?

I want to know your personal reasons for thinking of this product...

It was, basically, it started off with...erm...basically, when I go to museums or art galleries. The idea kind of came initially from the new display systems, well not the display, the sort of...erm... like a cocooned area where you can stand underneath and it sort of gives you an explanation of what the new product is, sort of thing. It's quite a new sort of thing. That sort of gave me the idea of likeerm...being able to sort of tell people stories in different ways, give them information. But I didn't want to do it in a museum sort of area, sort of thing, because...err...basically people don't pay much attention to that kind of thing. They would rather not see them so I was going for a more, being able to tell stories sort of way and then it sort of led on to going outside. And I'd initially thought of maybe putting it up at the castle but then I saw that as more people coming as a tourist attraction, so then I moved it to somewhere more secluded where people could sit or stand and listen to it. Instead of the hustle bustle of Edinburgh Castle. And I could get lots of stories from hikers and students and just random people that are up and Arthur's Seat so...

So basically it has just one function?

Yeah.

So if you wanted to give me a hierarchy of the different functions your product does...or were there any different functions that you discovered during deployment?

Erm...I haven't really included any different usage. The actual product's fairly basic and simple and its main function is its only function. The only side thing is people's interaction and people sending me their stories but the main function is the telling of the stories. So...

The internet interaction sort of thing where people can come on and hear all the stories because I'm going to have it set up so that...erm...I could....erm...have all the stories on it and then people could come on and listen to more instead of having to listen to them at Arthur's Seat but I haven't fully uploaded it yet, so...

Does it engage people?

Not as much as I would like to, 'cause...erm...at the minute the only way I have of like getting people to tell their stories is that they have to go home and record it themselves. Now that I'm looking back on it I would like to have had it that they had the capability of recording their stories then and there, so they can actually pick up a dictaphone and tell their story at that moment in time, sort of thing, so it is a bit more interactive. The only interactive part at the minute is the fact that they walk up in front of it and it turns it on but that's a very small part, sort of thing, so...I'd like to make it more interactive, as you say deploying it has given me, like, more ideas of more things to do, sort of thing...

Can you think of any other functions or use for it?

Can't really think of many other ones.

What has been others' opinion, e.g. your friends, your family, what they thought about it?

It's quite funny when you ask people's opinions about it, because they initially try to tell you what you want to hear, sort of thing, but...erm...most of the people I know have been like, 'it's a nice idea but I don't think it'll catch on very well', sort of thing. It might work quite well but they are saying that the major problem is that people don't like to hear their own voice, they don't like recording things. They don't like hearing their own voice being played back to them so it's very hard to get people to actually do the recording, sort of thing. It maybe wouldn't be so bad if you could actually just have the recording sort of things with it, so that helped in generating some ideas, so it was quite handy so...but people like the idea of hearing other people's tales but cause its only the sort of thing that people like their weird stories they haven't heard before.

I got one response from a guy that said it basically just looked like a stick pushed in the ground people so he never have bothered with it...erm...

So they have opinions about the features and the form of it?

Yeah. So he was saying could be more attractive or more engaging, sort of thing.

I personally like the form of the object...it's really modern...minimalist...

Yeah, I tried to keep it simple.

Maybe rooted in your engineering experience?

Yeah.

The last one is what makes your product unique or different from those in the market or you friends' products?

Erm...basically, I have never seen anything like it. Mainly all stories or historical stories are factual. Yeah I don't think there has ever been anything put up on Arthur's Seat. I think they would frown upon that a little bit. I was trying to hide from the rangers. Make sure they didn't say, 'no, go away'.... the good thing about it was that it was sort of left open that you didn't have to...your story could have been why you never went up Arthur's seat. It was more everybody's general idea that sort of thing.

So you find some relationship with the object and the place?

Yeah.

What do you think your next stage will be?

Erm...I'm not sure. I think I would try and make it a little complex so erm...I could set it up so you could have a possibility of pushing a button and recording your own thing at the sort of or area. And I also notice that when I was recording all of the stuff I was getting people's opinions. I was sitting further away, really far away when I started to record them but it would be really nice to have like a camera there so I can see their face when their listening, so I can sort of see what they saying at the same time. So it's not a pre-fabricated answer, 'oh it's great' but you could hear what they think at the time. So I think just adding more things to it so it's a little more complex but it helps a little bit of it but I'm not really sure if I'd be able to take it up and just leave it in general. There's a lot of councils. I'm trying to get round them, but...

Thank you.

APPENDIX II

The transcript of the focus group discussions with older women:

Focus group discussion with ALP group (FGD1)

The first question is that for some people the kitchen is just a means to an end and for others it's the heart of the home. What does the kitchen mean to you?

- *The heart of the home. I mean, one or two of us live alone but its still the core. Life is what you feed yourself and that's your place to do it.*
- *I see it more as a means to an end. The heart of the home is my living room.*
- *It also depends on your house because when you see magazines and they've got lovely kitchens and you know I would love a big table in the middle of the kitchen.*
- *Yeah and you're cooking and talking to...*
- *Nicola's homes like that...I wouldn't say mine's like that, I just go in there and everybody else is through there and I think I can't wait to get back...*
- *It's a means to an end 'cause you need to cook in it.*
- *At this moment or maybe during our lives?*
- *The thing is when you have family it is the core of the house. Although a lot of people don't have that now. People are always saying this, that people don't sit down and eat.*
- *But not in the kitchen that would be in the dining area.*
- *Is that what you mean? No?*
- *It depends if you can eat in it. That's...*
- *A lot of them have got these kitchen diners...*
- *Yes.*
- *Aye, that's what mine is.*
- *They didn't want a wall in between they wanted it all encompassed and they had those big centrepieces.*
- *I know...islands...*
- *So that it was all going on. People could sit around and talk.*
- *That's nice. She loves the kids being in there, says 'I don't have to go to the kitchen and leave the kids'.*
- *That's it.*
- *...in the other room. Everybody's in the same room and she's got a little snug. So it's the heart of her house.*

- *Not mine. Mine there's the kitchen...*
- *You eat in yours...*
- *Aye.*
- *So like your kitchen is here, there's an island, as you were saying, and the diner's here. So you can be, maybe not preparing the meal, because that would be annoying when people come but when you've sat down for your first course, you can chat to them whilst you are getting the rest of the meal together.*
- *I don't want people to see me when I'm scuttering about trying to get a meal together!*
- *It depends on how your house is. Certainly it would be if you had your kitchen with your table and everything.*

How do you explain changes in the kitchen? Have you noticed any changes in the kitchen from your younger years to now, or...

- *We didn't have a fridge when I was growing up.*
- *No.*
- *Neither did I.*
- *My mum just shopped on a daily basis. Everyday she shopped for food. And we kept the milk at night in a basin of cold water. We kept it on our windowsill. We didn't have a fridge 'til I was 19!*

After the '80s and '90s what changes did you notice?

- *It's all for convenience now. It very much geared for it, you know, microwave ovens and people watch cooking programmes but they go out and buy a ready meal. Especially with the single people. You know youngsters that have got a flat and you know don't want to cook. I think there's a lot more for convenience now.*
- *People don't have time to cook.*
- *I know, I know.*
- *We all watched our mothers cooking. We were in the kitchen watching. We got to lick the spoon. But that's not going on any more.*
- *Not in general. You know. There's still people trying to do that but...*
- *Well your mother taught you how to cook when you were...*
- *Not deliberately but you watched.*
- *My mother and my auntie did it together so...but I think that its without a doubt much more labour saving, you know. I mean, dishwashers, washing machines, you know.*
- *A lot of the labour has been taken out of what you have to do.*
- *Cooking now is faster...*

- *A freezer...you know...before you went and bought your veg fresh, now you can think, 'oh I'm gonna make that, great I've got that in the freezer, I've got that', you know, which all makes life more easy.*
- *It's just time isn't it? Just that fact that people both parties are working whereas in our time most of our mothers were at home. And when I was going through it, it was a case of you worked and you did everything. You still looked after the men, you still looked after the family, erm...maybe not everybody did that but that was the general idea and now its gone to another stage where the male and the female have equal rights and things like that, and respect each other at that level, and I don't think it was our men's fault, I think it was just the way they were brought up to believe they were the bread-winners and we were brought up more or less to believe that we took care of the children the family and, you know, all the rest of it really. That's how I see it anyway...*
- *We were making bread years ago. We were making it by hand. Now you've got these breadmakers, coffeemakers, every kind of maker that you want, so it's an easier lifestyle.*
- *And yet for some people there is always the kitchen appliance graveyard because you buy these things and never use them.*
- *I've got a mini-chopper and I think, 'you really want to get that out and use it' and then you've got to take all the bits apart and wash it when I can just cut it up...
[Laughs.]*
- *It's amazing what they can do...even coffee grinders...some of the chefs use them, to grind garlic and pesto, stuff like that...*
- *That the one that goes like that?*
- *If you want just to make a little bit of pesto or something like that you can use a coffee grinder.*

So does it affect the appearance of appliances as well changes in culture, changes in eating?

- *It does. They've got to look attractive when they're set out in the kitchen. Before, a kettle was basic. Now it can be the colour of your kitchen. A bell shaped one or a dumpy one...*
- *Yeah, that's right? If you've got stainless steel you can get stainless steal appliances. Depends on the colour scheme now that they've got a whole range of pink appliances so...*

Are you tempted to get some of these appliances?

- *Well...the shop near where I live has got a while pink window of household things but a lot of kitchen things. And it really caught my eye the other day and I quite liked them. This is marketing...*
- *Yeah.*

- *Before you just bought a kettle and that's it but now it's like they've all got kitchen and a kettle and it's not going to break do lets make a more attractive kettle and...*

So beyond marketing, something that people really want?

- *Kettles last for a long time.*
- *Yeah but people just think...they want something new now. They want to change the colour...*
- *And someone you know's just got a new kitchen and suddenly yours doesn't look quite new...it's the main reason a kitchen can date. I mean our kitchen looks quite old now but its not all cupboards but drawers. A fantastic idea. I wouldn't have thought of that. You pull out the drawers and put anything in.*
- *I've got drawers and cupboards and I put everything in the cupboards and not the drawers...*
- *I've got drawers but I've got my pots and pans in the drawers.*
- *Have you?*
- *Yeah. I haven't got many drawers...I've only got about four.*
- *Are they awfully deep?*
- *Two of them are very deep...*
- *Also. Washers and washer-driers...now they have a lot of washer-drier combinations in flats in this country. They have got them more...now what's the word...economical. They use less electricity. So from that point of view, you know, things have got better and it's saving you money.*
- *And environmentally friendly...*
- *And the same with the kettles...I mean, we used to put the kettle on the actual stove and wait for it and it would boil and boil and boil and we would forget about it...
[Laughs.]*
- *No you have even got kettles that do for a single cup...if you are on your own, you know...*
- *And you've not got to boil the whole kettle so it all depends how you live...*
- *That's right...you can get a coffee machine that is your alarm clock, it wakes you up and while you are having your shower it's making your coffee and you can...*
- *I saw one a few weeks ago...and I never watch these shows, you know these selling shows...*
- *QVC?*
- *And they had a coffeemaker-toaster that made your toast!*

- *It wakens you up and because you waken up it starts to work as you have filled it with water the night before and you have your shower and pop the toast in as you are passing by [laughs].*

You are talking mostly about functions, do you also consider emotional aspects in terms of products?

- *Frustration, sometimes! [Laughs.]*
- *Something that reduces our frustration? Have you ever noticed this in new products, or...?*
- *Well if something doesn't work very well it's...I mean, I've only got a wee kitchen and got a dishwasher...never used it 'cause it doesn't work very well. And the frustration of that, you know...*
- *The frustration is different to what the reality is.*
- *The thing is with a dishwasher is if you've got family it takes the sting out of living...*
- *Kids can use as many cups as they like all day, because you don't have to wash them. You just have to stack them.*
- *Is this what you mean? No?*

I'm thinking more for example, I have some images... Functional but at the same time it is colourful, when you look at it it reminds you of your childhood probably...

- *I'm more bothered if things are practical...*
- *I like these things...I'm a sucker for buying things that look...*
- *Now the wee egg cups, now that would make me smile, you know, those wee cute eggcups like that, yeah. I mean I've bought them for grandchildren and that's nice. I these are the sort of things you'd buy somebody as a gift. You would buy for a present but I would buy something like that for functional reasons.*

Why?

- *Probably because I regard my kitchen as a meal machine. It's functional. I don't look...may be if it was like as we used to, say, the room you lived a lot in...like you put ornaments in your lounge because it's nice, or flowers in your lounge because it's nice, you would maybe put things like that in your kitchen if it was attractive, but I'm only in my kitchen to cook, clean, do washing. I can't see any great emotional...*
- *I'm quite emotional about my kitchen because I lost my husband and brought my two children back from Canada and when I moved into my house I had a bit of trouble with my eating and my kitchen was a nightmare for me. So that's why I've got quite...not now, but bad feelings about my kitchen because I hated my kitchen at one point because I just...I didn't buy huge amounts of stuff that I could eat, because every time I went into the kitchen I was looking for something to eat. So I had a lot of bad feelings about my kitchen so yeah I've got very strong emotional feelings about the kitchen as a whole, not as a place, not necessarily for the appliances that are in it but...I don't have that now but... I got help. Because I was very, very upset and...because I was on my own with two children. I was comfort eating so I just ...I suppose maybe the fridge was the worst thing. The fridge was the worst place for me,*

but the kitchen as a whole. Even now, I don't feel totally, one hundred percent comfortable in the kitchen, but it's ok now.

Do you have any similar stories that you can tell me that explain your feelings about your kitchen...?

- *I mean what I've got in my kitchen, on my fridge is lots of fridge magnets and photos of my grandchildren and I've got a wall in my kitchen...every so often I just print one off my computer. Every time I add one I think I should take some down but I find it very hard to tear up a photograph. We had workmen in and I thought, 'god what must they think?'. So that makes me happy but it's not a gadget. Well it is because we've got, like, erm...the fridge magnets that maybe we can put like prescriptions we need to get...stick it up, but little pictures and I always open the fridge door and smile because I've got wee faces looking at me, so there's that...but its not something like that. As I say, these things are very cute and I look at them in a shop and I think they're really cute but I wouldn't go and buy them...*
- *'Cause our children are grown up...*
- *Yeah.*
- *I love the eggcup...*
- *I would think children...*
- *I don't like clutter...*
- *Neither do I.*
- *I wouldn't have that in my...*
- *No.*

Would young people have that?

- *Young people might...*
- *Yeah, I think probably yeah.*
- *The only one I don't like...*
- *See I could see a guy thinking that was hilarious.*
- *But I also think the pepper pot is quite nice ...*
- *The corkscrew's ok...*
- *But again I would buy that as a wee daft housewarming thing.*
- *There's a shop that sells a lot of stuff like this and I go in and I think, 'what is that?!'.*

This is my question too...

- *You say it too?*

Yeah.

- *But I would say probably not people who were our age. Probably the younger generation...*
- *If you were interviewing women about 21, 22 with children, they would love this. Not all of them, but...the colours...*
- *Yeah.*
- *I used to absolutely adore my kitchen when I was younger. And that was really only because my children were young and I used to just love getting out the baking things and they would have their bits and we'd all...by the time we were finished it would all be a bloody mess...it was absolutely covered in flour and, you know, half the things probably didn't bake properly or whatever, but it was just fabulous. I mean I miss that dreadfully.*
- *When I lived in Balfour Street it was a small bedroom that we made into a kitchen. And this was forty-two years ago and so... not the same amount of work for the kids. First a washing machine, we had in those days, and I'm giving my age away here, towelling nappies and I said to my husband, 'I can't do this any more' and he found one, second hand. It was a twin-tub. You know what I mean?*
- *Oh no and run through and that was the kitchen floor...and I think that's why people would go for that. When you're young, it's new and you appreciate everything and you do have a love for it. It's your home and you put your sort of personality on it.*
- *Yeah, you talking about the nappies I mean mine were exactly the same, the terry towelling nappies and I'll never forget a comment from my mother-in-law and she always said she was for Women's Lib. and all that and I didn't have a washing machine to start with either. And you had to soak them in a thing called Napisan in the bath or something. I was desperate to get a machine because it was all this work. You've got a couple of kids and you've got all this scrubbing and things to do and hang it all out the window, because it was actually a flat I was and they had a pulley, a rope that went out the window. And of course I was very tall and I used to wear high heels a lot...so of course it was a short window, so half the time I could see myself flying out because I forgot to take the high heels off. And I remember my mother-in-law coming when I had a really difficult day, I think one was bawling his head off and 'oh', she said, 'that's such a good invention that Napisan, isn't it? You will never need a washing machine.' [Laughs.]*

What is the cherished object in your kitchen?

- *Fridge freezer.*
- *Of course nowadays we shop differently too. We go to big supermarkets. We buy in bulk...*
- *Too much.*
- *...We bring it home and put it in the freezer and, as you say, we've always got something to make a meal with.*
- *That's it...or when you are having people [over]...or come Christmas. I remember when you had your fridge with a wee tiny freezer bit at the top and now you can have yourself stocked up for Christmas or pre-cook a few things if you've got people*

coming over. It's the convenience or having your bolognaise sauce in there ready rather than having to do it on the day. The fridge freezer stops you having to go shopping everyday.

- *I don't shop like that... 'cause I live in a place where I've got lots of shops near me. I'm going back to shopping more daily and I've just found...I never buy things pre-cooked...*
- *Oh, I don't buy those. The only things I put in the freezer now are soup or maybe stew of something. But everything else I have cooked and stuck in the freezer, I've brought it out and thought, 'don't like that.*
- *I know.*
- *So I'm sometimes a wee bit stuck sometimes. I've just gone to my freezer and found a meal.*
- *Mine would have to be the dishwasher.*
- *Yeah.*
- *I was a student. That was one of the best things as there'd be a mountain of dishes, but now I've still got some dishes...I can't get them all in now that's the only thing...*
- *I have a dishwasher but I only do the glasses and a few pots...*
- *But on days like Christmas, you remember Christmas and then it was like...but now while someone's going off having to wash up but now the dishes are going into the dishwasher, so that's a joy, that nobody's standing in the kitchen washing and drying dishes.*
- *I s'pose the washing machine too.*
- *Well that's true.*
- *Washing machine and dishwasher. I wouldn't like...imagine washing by hand...*
- *I know.*
- *What would you do without the most?*
- *Because you could manage without a dishwasher, a freezer...I mean, you could...but without a washing machine...*
- *I went to the washhouse...you'll probably never have heard that word. But once my mother got married and I've been married 43 years and there was a scrubbing board and she gave me a sink and something to put on it and I skinned all the all my fingers...it would take the skin off my hands! I said to her, 'well I will never be back in a washhouse' and she said, 'you maybe will'.*
- *I picked up a washing machine, not my twin tub to begin with but the one with the wee mangle, I started off with that but I would say, yeah, the washing machine nowadays.*
- *I don't need one where I live. There's a communal one.*

- *And of course you could go to the laundrette but that would be such a pain because...*
- *But you're still not going to wash your clothes...*
- *Yeah, I would say more than my fridge-freezer, washing machine.*

What about things, like a gift or a souvenir, that you have a connection to emotions, not because of function?

- *Oh right.*
- *I've got one. It's a corkscrew. I don't drink a lot of wine but we bought his corkscrew. We went to Benidorm before I had my family. I was actually pregnant and didn't know it. Spent most of the fortnight throwing up, you know, and when we were there, they had these...they are wooden and it screws down and screws back up and I have had that now, well, Nicola will be 40 in February, so it's forty years just now. And we've had other ones that folk have given us but that corkscrew still works and Nicola still says, 'I can't work your corkscrew', it's so easy, you go like that you screw...*
- *She lacks practice [laughs].*
- *So every time I look at that I think, 'I've had that for nearly as long as I've been married' and that's emotional because that's the last holiday the two of us had before...we had our family.*
- *My whole kitchen at the moment is probably...I do like my kitchen. Because up until that point I've never had a new kitchen before and...erm...I think things have been very tough financially and then I had the money and I ripped out the whole kitchen and put this kitchen in and I used to just get up in the morning and just go and look at the kitchen. And I feel sometimes although it's just like a machine, a cooking machine, but still I'd go... [gasps]. It was so...everything was new and I'd never had that before. So that was nice.*

You don't have an object that you are connected with emotionally?

- *Well, when I got married my father had one sister and she married quite a rich man and they said to me they would give us a fridge for our wedding present. Now 43 years ago getting a fridge for a wedding present was wow! So I would have been daft to have said 'no I don't want a fridge' so I did get the fridge and there we were...what I am saying is, when I think about it now I suppose a washing machine would have been more...we did get this wee single washing machine and we had that. But we did get this fridge and, boy, was I proud of that fridge!*
- *Yeah.*
- *And it was a wedding present so it was a cherished thing because it was for my wedding.*
- *Mmm.*
- *I've got a little silver teaspoon that was my grandmothers and...years ago you used to get the loose tea in a thing that was called a caddy and there was a little special spoon you got for lifting out the tea and this little spoon has got Melrose's tea 1912, so the spoon is coming up to nearly a hundred years old and it still looks...I just give it*

a little polish. What I do now is I use it for sugar. And every student that comes into the house will go 'oh what's this?' I think it was just about the only thing my grandmother left...

That's nice.

- *Melrose's tea used to be down Cockburn Street.*
- *Oh right.*
- *I can't honestly say I could get emotional about anything. These are practical things to us.*

I collect mug. I want you to tell me how you feel about these...

- *[Laughs.] Irish! I like that because my daughter lives in Ireland. That's lovely actually. It's really nice.*

Which one do you like most and why?

- *[All talk together]*
- *I don't like thick mugs.*
- *I like that one just because of the Irish connection.*
- *A lot of people don't like big heavy mugs, I have to say.*
- *Especially our age. A lot of people we brought up with china cups and saucers for their tea.*
- *We never had mugs.*
- *No.*
- *That's very elegant and pretty and dainty, isn't it?*
- *That's too small.*
- *Some people have their favourite mug in the kitchen.*
- *My husband does. We had two the same. One, I knocked it and it went skiting across the kitchen floor into bits. And he likes a smaller mug, like that.*
- *That's beautiful but I mean as you say...*
- *It's dainty.*
- *Not enough. Maybe for a cup of tea*
- *For an old, old lady with little thin lips. Laughs*
- *Thank you very much.*

This is the things that I was looking for what you think about new kinds of gadgets and

- *The thing is most of us grew up after the war last war you know and we had nothing and slowly slowly our mothers got things and then slowly slowly we got things.*

- *Yeah, we got some of the films that were in America and America was way ahead of anything we had, and they all had ice boxes and...*
- *In the Scotland on Sunday an Aga white with pink flowers. Emma Bridgewater that still has a china shop down Castle Street or something.*
- *Oh yeah.*
- *And she's incorporating in her design. Guess how much?*
- *Five thousand pounds?*
- *Ten thousand! An Aga! Because it was by Emma Bridgewater.*
- *Well me what an Aga is?*
- *Well. It used to be farmhouses that had them. And they'd take the wood of the land and burn it and it's a great big...big cast iron doors. Solid stove and it has a little oven here and great big wrought on the top.*
- *Almost like an old-fashioned what people used to call a range.*
- *Yeah. It was always mostly people in the country that...*
- *[All talk together]*
- *...Now they are in vogue...everybody's got to have an Aga because the toffs have them and it just warms the kitchen so much...*
- *But now you can get a gas, Aga, and electric Aga, oil Aga...it's gone really rich.*

Thank you.

Focus group discussion in the church (FGD 2)

Some people believe that the kitchen is just a meal machine, and others think that it's the heart of the house. What does it mean for you?

- *I think when my family were at home it definitely was the heart of the house. Now that I'm on my own, it's just a place to make a meal. It's not quite the same...it just depends.*
- *When I was young I lived in a family of 7, so my mum spent quite a lot of time in the kitchen preparing meals for us and now I find that I'm living with my husband and one of my daughters still, and I have another daughter with 3 grandchildren, so we use the kitchen and dining area quite a bit.*

Do you feel that your feelings towards your kitchen have changed over your life, from when you were a child to now?

- *Well, I think when I was in my 20s, 30s even 40s, I spent quite a lot of time in the kitchen because I enjoyed preparing food. And it's quite a Scottish thing to do, homemade things, and I can remember that on a Sunday morning I would be up at 7 making cheese scones and sponges and then people would come after church in the afternoon and, you know, I really enjoyed my kitchen and had lots of Kenwood Chefs and things like that, whereas now it's not quite the same. And my family aren't really in Edinburgh, so I don't see a lot of them...*
- *I would say that for me the kitchen was still very much the same as it has always been, apart from late teens when I was away from home, but then I got married it's always been the centre point of the home.*

Do you have any stories that represent your feeling towards the kitchen?

- *Well I'm thinking when my children were teenagers and we had breakfast in the kitchen and usually there was a row, just because they were teenagers...you said black, they said white. So that was not a particularly good start to the day in the kitchen!*
- *No, for me, yes it's been a place of great discussions, talking laughing, just gathering together, been a gathering place for the family and friend and visitors passing through. I can't think of any story about the kitchen directly.*

Do you think that appliances in your kitchen can have a role as a matter of decoration, or function or as a matter of debate sometimes?

- *At present? The only thing that I can think of perhaps is things that we put up on the door of the fridge, you know, a picture or a saying or a photo or something, will just spark off a conversation in the kitchen.*

You don't have anything unusual that will catch people's attention in your kitchen or in your friends' kitchens?

- *Well, my neighbour goes in for some very fancy technology so he has a very fancy bread machine...he makes bread and his family gave him a very expensive coffee machine that makes cappuccino coffee so I have been in there and said, 'I hope you are going to give me some bread'. The coffee is very nice too. I don't know a lot about it but you can do cappuccino, latte and lots of other things. That's the talking point in his kitchen.*

- *Although I have a large kitchen diner, the actual work surfaces I don't have an awful lot of. I have one of those stand up wooden trolleys as well in the centre of the kitchen that I can work off or whatever. So that restricts the amount of gadgets that I can have on the worktops in some areas.*

What do you like most in your kitchen...?

- *Presently I would say that my favourite piece of equipment is the microwave. Very handy.*
- *I think, for me it would be my electric hob rings, the electric cooker. I think because when I was a child my father worked as an engineer at the hydroelectric board, so all my days I preferred electric to gas. And there's quite a funny story when I was doing cookery at school and I was doing an exam and we were working in twos and my friend she opened the oven and it was a gas one and I can't remember what had happened but she ended up getting her eyebrow singed and it made me appreciate even more why I liked electrical cookers [laughs].*

Your hob, you acquired it yourself or was it here when you moved in?

- *We installed it ourselves.*

So you chose it?

- *If I remember rightly, because I'm going back 33 years, I think it was electric and its always been electric, yes.*

In your experience you've never noticed any funny or playful objects in your kitchen or other kitchens? What is your attitude if you find something that is functional but at the same time has some sort of play element, in its appearance for example? These images might help you?

- *I would look at the price and, you know, things like this I have seen in John Lewis, I would think, 'well people have got more money than sense'. I think we were brought up in an era where everything was very functional. It was fun, with a sense of humour that you thought of when you thought of the place called the kitchen. It was very much just going in and cooking and baking and you never stopped to think of the fun side, so it was probably intrigue me to go into somebody's kitchen and see some of those gadgets. I would find them a novelty...*

But you might not want them yourself...

- *Some of them I think very nice but I managed all those years without one so I might not be rushing to buy one.*

How about it you found them cheap at the market, would you buy them?

- *I don't think so, no.*
- *Well, I think possibly some of these things, the teacups stay on the worktop or even...I've got bottle tops, there not like that but they're in a drawer. If you had things where you wanted people to think this is really fun, you wouldn't really put them away in a drawer. So as you wipe down your worktop could I be bothered lifting a lot of things?*

- *I suppose I'm more practical and as I've got older I'm much more, you know, practical. I s'pose for my wee grandson, I might go visit him and he might like something but that's not my kitchen so...*
- *In 2010...there are times where I find something like a milk jug wouldn't even come into the cupboard now, because of our fast pace of living, where you would just go to the fridge and you would just get the plastic carton out and work in the kitchen from that and put the milk for the people into their mugs or their cups. And sort of setting the table the traditional way...there's certain pieces of crockery and things like that that you wouldn't use now, sadly.*
- *Well nobody really knows what a cup and saucer is now...well you might know what it is but very seldom would you go to someone's house and get a cup and saucer, you would get a cup of tea or coffee in a mug.*

What is the most cherished object in your kitchen?

- *I think for me it would probably be a little ceramic plaque that one of my daughters gave me and that just hangs on the wall of the kitchen in one of the corners there and that to me is priceless.*
- *I don't think I've got anything I wouldn't...I s'pose if something broke down I'd just replace it. There's nothing really I can think of.*

OK. I have some mugs here...

- *The Irish mug I used to have...the handle inside. I have one because my husband was Irish.*

OK! So you have something funny but couldn't remember!

- *Not in my kitchen ...it's in a cupboard.*
- *This is fun!*

So what do you think of this mug?

- *I can understand that.*
- *Yes.*
I wouldn't go and buy it, I don't even think my daughters would go and buy it.
- *Well, my mugs are kept in a cupboard so...erm...I have four mugs that are stacked up at the side but that would be the only mugs. All the rest are in the cupboards, for space.*

What do you think about this one?

- *It's novel...*
- *It would be a point of conversation for people. But I wouldn't go 'specially to purchase one.*
- *We got it as a present because of the Irish connection, years ago.*

You think these can't be very functional because they are funny, or...? You won't use them?

- *No. In fact they are lacking humour! [Laughs]*

This is the thing that I want to know about, because nobody speaks about this. How people approach the object is what I really want to see.

- *I think it is also because at the time we were brought up, we had just come through the Second World War and a lot of our families were quite poor. You didn't have a lot of money and families had many children in some cases and there wasn't the fun aspect. The kitchen was very much a place you just went to cook and you were just glad to have food in the cupboard let alone have the idea of how to make that a fun issue.*

I think to me it's the same in the country that I come from which struggled with poverty and if you didn't have things to eat, having fun is so far from...I can understand and I'm going to compare this state with the young generation to see...

To come to conclusion, so you cannot, as I notice...actually you see functional things totally...it's not something that you can be equated with fun in your mind?

- *Mmm...*
- *When you said to begin with, about seeing the kitchen with the play things, that would just never have entered your head...erm...*
- *I don't even know if the younger generation...if they would be interested...when you do a compare and contrast...you know...but I could be very wrong...*

Have you heard about ... apartments without a kitchen in them? So they just have a living room and bedroom and bathroom...have you witnessed that?

- *No.*
- *Would that be younger people who don't cook? Mind you a lot of younger people in Edinburgh, they wouldn't think about making breakfast, they just go to Starbucks or Costa. I'm appalled by how they can afford to do it, but that is a generation thing. And a lot of people will come home tired and just phone up for a carry out....*
- *They eat in front of the TV?*
- *Yeah.*
- *They don't want ever to go into the kitchen. So the necessity of the kitchen even nowadays, is a question mark?*
- *I don't....well, I think for most people...even in the newer houses that are being build people are wanting a big, family kitchen...*
- *Yes...in that sense the kitchen is more than just a place in which you cook and bake cakes...it is the hub of the home. Whenever you put a worktop or a table or something in that kitchen area or near that kitchen area, people tend to gather round, and gravitate to that central area. And that's the one time in the day that you are likely to communicate most, more than any other time or in any other room, as a family unit.*
- *I think that's what I meant, having moved into a flat, kitchen is much smaller than when I had a family. We had a big pine table with six chairs and people came in and you sat down and, you know, that was it. And I had room for more equipment. But not now. I think, each generation, it's a different stage in your life. And you have to adapt accordingly.*

Thank you. Would you like to add anything to this?

- *Just that I hope that, down the generations, we will always see the joy of having a kitchen area where we can be together and relate with one another and enjoy being together.*
- *I think recently, mainly because of all the cookery programmes on the television, I think there has been a resurgence of people being more interested in making food from scratch rather than just buying readymeals, and enjoying trying out new recipes and inviting, you know, friends. I think my son, who never cooked and now there's like three couples and the wives and husbands take turnabout doing the meal. So that's interesting! His wife said when I went over I had not to give him special help and just get there in time for the meal. But he was great. He will have a recipe in front of him and, you know. Get the glasses on and...so it's kind of role reversal.*
- *I don't do that now, I buy things for...*
- *It's true really...*
- *Its time for sharing...*
- *Having said that, I go panic when the family come over or I have four or six for a meal and I used to do it everyday without batting an eyelid, I'm now thinking, 'oh I have to put this on...' You do get out of the way of cooking for a family, you know...*

Thank you.

Appendix III

The transcript of ethnographic interviews with five younger women in Edinburgh:

Interview with J

This interview is about your feelings, experiences, skills and your memories about the kitchen...things that are evoked while you are cooking or by cooking.

Is it ok to have music on? It is just I always have music when I cook.

Yes.

The meal is not really a technical one, it is like chopping and then...it is not like big loads of different processes. Is that OK?

Yes, tell me why do you like this [dish] most? I am curious.

Well, I don't have a favourite meal, I flit between different favourite meals...you know. When I am inspired by a meal or someone cooks or gives a tip that I like, I try it out. My friend Ali just got back from a trip in Lao in Vietnam and she is travelling all around and she brought this recipe for us when she got back. So L. and I, my sister, have been cooking it a lot, just enjoying it for that reason. So, it is not like a historically favourite meal at all.

How long have you been cooking this meal?

Maybe 2-3 months. It is very new. I am vegetarian...I've never cooked meat before. I like to cook things with vegetables...I love the smell of leeks. [Cuts the leeks on a chopping board with a knife.] When I was wee we used to grow them in the garden in Livingston. It is a very...I don't know...it is a very lovely childhood smell. It's really nice.

So your mum used to make something with leeks

Yes, leek croustade. It's very 'of my childhood' dish.

We don't have these in Iran.

Then you don't have leeks in Iran...I think they are a very Welsh vegetable. It is the national vegetable of Wales.

Many French foods are made with leeks?

Yes, leek and white wine go together a lot in French food. It is a shame, because I don't eat meat so I didn't sample loads of the food that I could have when I was in France, when I lived there. Everything always smelt really delicious but unfortunately they are so meat-oriented. So I never really tried much French cooking when I lived there.

What do you like most about cooking?

I like the whole process of it. I like that it brings people together.

So the social aspects?

Yes, definitely.

Do you like to cook for other people?

Yes, I love cooking for other people and I love people cooking for me. Definitely social aspects, I am not really gifted at cooking. I just like making things that come to my head, picking random ingredients that I think look nice together. I've got loads of cookbooks but I

tend to make lots of vegetarian big salads and stuff like that, but quite just...I don't know...experimental.

And have you ever thought of buying new tools for your kitchen?

Oh, definitely. I go around John Lewis fantasising about buying all the kitchen stuff.

What kind of fantasy?

Well, I love the...lots of the lovely, fancy equipment...especially the coffee machines and the things for baking in particular...things for making cakes.

Do you bake?

Yeah, I do. My sister's amazing at baking. I do sort of icing for the cakes she makes. I don't really do much myself. I do love doing it. I love orange and polenta cake. Again the social aspect of it; waking up on a nice morning and spending your day baking for the rest of the week. I love that. And I love that baking can be gifts. Like making truffles for someone, or a cake for somebody, or taking round a dish for a potluck supper or something. I really like that side of cooking.

If you compare your way of cooking to your mum, what comes to your mind?

We are quite similar. We tease her for not sticking to recipes so things might sometimes go a wee bit wrong. She doesn't follow any rules.

Is she a good cook?

Yeah, I really like her cooking. She is also a vegetarian and she brought us making nut burgers, lots of things for kids; things that look appetising when you are wee. And she just, again like me, goes around buying ingredients, nice fresh fruit and veg and she shoves them all in a big pot, and doesn't really follow many recipes. But she's got a few things that she's really good at, like risotto. But I think we have got a quite similar style of cooking.

And the tools you both use, are they the same?

Only in that we both don't spend much money on stuff for the kitchen. So lots of the knives could be a lot sharper. The equipment could be a bit nicer and easier to use. But we just kind of make do with what we've got.

...I am just gonna get the pans ready. So what I am making is noodles with Vietnamese flavoured satay, so with peanut butter.

But cooking as well just brings to mind travelling and the different things you eat, like taste of street food in different countries. I love the traditions of cooking and how different people cook and eat together, how important it is to different cultures. These are lovely aspects of it as well.

Do you take it seriously or are you quite open about it and let yourself experiment?

I am quite open, but I do really appreciate people are dedicated to it. My friend Joe is complete foody and will spend the whole day cooking just one dish and making it absolutely perfect. He spends loads of money going to Michelin Star restaurants. I understand that...I don't quite understand the amount of money they spend on it, but yeah I love when people spend their time learning a certain type like Italian food perfectly or Iranian food or

something. That's really nice. I can like in big cities where you can go and find any food you want. I definitely am open to different flavours and parts of cooking.

So which task for you is much more exciting or would you like to try? Which tool for example in the kitchen you like most?

I like the grater most.

Grating?! I hate grating.

I just like how quickly you get something done, yeah definitely and a good hand whisk, if you can get something fluffy for making a cake.

You mean by hand?

Yeah, by hand or electrical, but I actually like by hand unless you get sore wrist...but I like it. It feels very much part of what is going on.

It is very interesting. So why do you like these tools again? You like the motion or that it gives you a while to think as it's repetitive?

Definitely, and you know that you are doing something really good...making a bread or a cake, and making it nice and fluffy...that [enacts the motion] is the symbol for baking I think, just getting things nice and ready...and covered in flour. It is...it's a nice time to reflect and think. It's another bit about cooking, you can just completely zone out and getting on with your cooking but have a nice time to think about whatever.

If I give you for example a difficult task or something you have never cooked, then do you feel the same?

No, I actually, as much as I like to be relaxed in the kitchen, I do get definitely a wee bit stressy. If I am given something like separating egg whites from egg yolk or something like that it can all go horribly wrong in seconds, so I don't like that. I do like a tasks...if you give me a recipe...for instance, if I'm making a birthday meal for family members and I want it to be very special and following a recipe, the satisfaction you get from doing it perfectly...

Now I can smell the leeks and garlic...

Yeah, lots of garlic. I like utensils like this, but that are plastic so you got a little bend in them, like a palette.

Is this wooden?

Yes, this one is wooden. No I don't like ones that don't have any give in them. I don't know...it limits you when you are stirring with them.

How about your stove?

It's an electric hob, yeah. It's not a very good cooker. It's fine. It's our landlord's. We asked him to give us a new one when we moved in. But is not great. It's fine. My ex-boyfriend had an Aga, and I liked how that completely changed how you cook. Because it's just hot all time and you move in between the different oven compartments. So making bread is completely...or making anything...we used to make loads of cakes together...and anything like that is completely different in that oven and you get really use to it and I love how that is in the middle of the house and it heats the house and it's very beautiful and functional.

I have seen new models, they try to keep the same function with quite modern, high-tech technology, but they try to keep the traditional look. They call it Retro. Many people in Edinburgh talked to me about Agas and how interesting or how they like them.

Oh, I love them...It is a nice way to cook, I think, because you have got different spaces to be cooking on and they are all different temperatures. You've got to think about it differently. But also, because it is usually, in the houses I have been in, they have got an Aga in the middle of the kitchen in the middle of the house. Everybody, if it is cold, sits around in the middle of the kitchen...even it enhances the sort of social side of the cooking. My brother would even be sitting on the hot plate with the lid down to warm his bum! But it is very different. You can't do anything quickly on an Aga. Which is good, it slows everything down.

Slow lifestyle...

It tends to tie with that lifestyle as well. I think the people that have them tend to be the slow cooking appreciators, I think. You know, shopping locally, and not getting everything as quick fix at the supermarket. Have you been to the farmers market?

Oh, yes, couple of times. The smell of the food is totally different from things you get from supermarkets.

Completely, this is all supermarket stuff [refers to the meal ingredients she is using] but I love going there sometimes.

When you said about the tools you saw in John Lewis, how do you decide which one is better than the other. What makes you decide?

I definitely look for practicality, does it look like I would like to use, how often would I use it, would I bother spending money on it, something for making cakes or something you do use every day, like really nice knives.

Functional?

Yeah, very functional. But I definitely am really attracted to nice design and sort of classic design, the stuff that looks really nice in the kitchen.

If you want to show me one of your choices in your kitchen, what it would be?

The weighing scales, probably. Old fashion style from a farmhouse. It is my favourite. We have got a Le Creuset pan somewhere...very heavy... [Takes out a small orange cast iron pan.]

What do you cook in this?

It is just for sautéing onions or something.

Frying?

Yeah. But definitely the scales are my favourite.

It is not just about function, it is about history...

Definitely. It reminds me of my gran when I was wee. We got it in antiques market. [Starts the CD again.] I think having the music on is part of it being so relaxing, you know, at the end of the day.

What kind of music do you usually listen to?

Usually it is nice Jazz or I have the radio on. I love listening to the radio... [Puts the ready-chopped pack of vegetables in the frying pan. The pan was overloaded with chopped vegetables but she was relaxed about it.]

What other stuff have you bought for your kitchen?

Ahh, what I bought recently...umm [while stirring] this teapot.

Is it your choice?

Yes, I got it for my sister for Christmas.

The same stuff as the scale... It shows the same person.

Most of the stuff was here when we got here. We got some baking things...this cake tin/mould but it looks like a giant cupcake when it comes out. It is huge.

Have you tried it? Was it successful?

It worked really well. But you have to wait ages for it to cook, so you don't pull it out and it's all soggy. But, Yeah, that works very well. That is a fun birthday cake for someone and...covered it with pink glitter, very girly.

You cook [this dish] very slow?

Yeah. For this meal, for example, it would be ideal to have a wok. That is what we need. We are doing it in a frying pan. The wok is much deeper than this.

The deeper ones, I call them Chinese pans...

Yes, exactly. My friend Ali, who made me this dinner when she came back from travelling, had that. I think it works maybe a wee bit better.

Have you ever thought of the playful aspects of what you do in the kitchen?

I guess you have your routine and your habits, as to how you chop and... I know my friend C. who's a really amazing Italian cook. He has a really specific way of chopping. I cannot make dinner with him, because he hates everything that I do. If I chop tomatoes...He has a specific way of all that. I suppose it is his own way of playing. It is all in a certain shape and size. It does make it better actually. For me it is more of a job, why bother? But aside from that, I don't know...I guess the having your music on, having your routine in that sense.

It is what I'm actually trying to say, is play in routine activities... How routine can be playful...

It is really true. If you think about it in terms of what part of the day you dedicate to cooking. This, when I was wee, and play in a traditional sense...you remember coming from the school, you get your toys out and stuff, we continue all that when we get older.

Do you see part of your childhood in the whole process of cooking?

Yes, definitely, because I used to pretend to cook when I was little. And making things for people and...yeah, definitely.

Then how do you try to keep this quality? Are you conscious about it?

I would not say I am conscious of it day to day. I am thinking about it when we are talking about it. It definitely makes sense.

Is this something that you want to keep, this feeling of play while doing the routine?

Yes, definitely, because I think that is why I don't like...for me it is not very serious, like sitting down and planning your meal very carefully.

You said you don't follow recipes?

No, not really. For special occasions maybe but not...

Can it be connected that you are not following recipes and keeping everything simple?

Yeah, I think that probably comes from each other. Just that it's a light and carefree task that I enjoy doing. It's not a chore at all.

There is a really good wee Thai [restaurant] in Bruntsfield and, or specific Delhi, and really good Chinese supermarket on Leith walk. I'm spilling it everywhere, that's why I need a wok, it's deeper [laughs].

What are these images here?

They are not specific to the kitchen. Well this one is, obviously. They are just the images that I've really liked. Collected. This is a chef. I like Allegra McEvedy. She writes a food column for The Guardian and she founded a restaurant in London named Leon. It is from her cafe and it is such a sweet photograph. It was in her café. This is one of my favourite paintings. These are postcards from my friends.

Did she take it herself?

No. She went to Stockholm and sent me a postcard.

This is from a collector?

Yeah, I love that, because I love teapots.

I like it. It's very nice.

This is nearly ready. And at the last second you just squirt in some fresh lime.

Why there is a hole in this spatula?

I don't know.

I saw a similar thing for cracking pasta.

Maybe it is that then.

Ready?

Yeah, ready.

Well done.

Interview with R

What do have for us today?

We have asparagus from the farmers market, and duck eggs, and I have got a little brown shrimp, and then I'm going to try pannacotta for the first time and I've got butter milk and cream for that and I thought I'd do it with some poached rhubarb. We'll see what happens...

[Taking out the recipe book] Best recipe's in here...this is 'nose to tail cookery, which means eating the whole animal.

Is it OK to take photos for my own web blog?

Yes, sure, why not.

[Brings out her Nikon camera, puts the radio on, does some washing up, puts a towel underneath the chopping board] So...just getting things generally ready before I start. I went

to a cook school at Martin Wishart's and they kind of tell you how to do things, so I have got it set up, so like having like a pot for vegetable ends and having clean towel here [indicates to underneath the chopping board].

So you did a course?

Yeah, just a day thing.

How did you find it?

[Sets up the table to take photos for her web blog. She puts a cotton table cloth on the table, and arranges eggs, asparagus and shrimps on top of it.]

I think I am quite into food and it's something. I think about it a lot, and when you have been doing it for a while and thinking about it a lot, you kind of get to a standard, and it was good because you are working with people who are at the top of their game having worked in a Michelin restaurant. You have got such a great source of knowledge to learn from. Also things like seasoning properly, making sure you are seasoning properly every level.

So I started cookery books two months ago and learnt lots...you eat with your eyes so I am trying to take better photos...

What made you decide to have this web blog?

I've thought about this quite a lot. I am not sure why I started. I think it is because I do really enjoy thinking about food, and seemed like a good excuse to think about it a lot without being weird. But I really enjoy doing it I think because it has so many different elements to it. So I thought when you are doing a blog it was just about food but there is lots of different elements to it. Like there is a big community and there is quite a variety of blogs and you've got to take nice photographs. That I had no idea about beforehand.

This is my favourite knife. It's not too big, not too small.

Chef's knife?

One of the things that makes me happiest about food is just the produce. Seeing this asparagus made me happy this morning. This asparagus is so pretty. [Puts a frying pan on the gas stove, along with a deeper pan for boiling the asparagus, filled with boiled water from the kettle.]

Have you tried duck eggs?

Yes, I think maybe in Iran, but not here. It shouldn't be very different...

The yolk is meant to be denser...we will see...

Can you tell me how you decide to buy things for your kitchen?

In terms of appliances?

Kitchen appliances.

It is more by default than anything else. I moved in with my boyfriend about a year ago and the microwave, cooker, kettle and toaster are all his and he just went for them because they were cheap. I don't think there is any thought behind it. I got this pan for my 21st from my grandma and my grandma is the person that got me into cooking. She is very much 'food is love'. You can't not eat when you go to her house. She won't let you. So you have to be prepared when you go over and make sure you have an empty stomach and she gave me a big cheque towards the house, and then some money to get myself a present so I chose that

because I always associate my grandma with cooking and it is something you'll have forever. My mum's got the Le Crouset pans...she has had them for thirty, forty years and they are still going strong. I think I like them because they look nice but they are also functional and I think that is good. The colour I suppose it was fun but you know, it is fun but I do like the green ones and that colour of that pot was the inspiration for that wall and when we got the house, like the offer accepted on the house, I bought this Ferrel which is the same colour. The knives were presents. I think when people know you are interested in food and cooking, they quite like getting you things.

So you like it?

Yeah, yeah, definitely. A lot off what we've got are actually presents. This [radio] was again a present from the boyfriend. He knows I really like those radios, he got one, the one we've got in the bedroom, I got for my Christmas. And I think he just got that as a wee present when he got a bonus at work.

So you always listen to the radio?

Yes, always. It is normally Radio 2. Radio 4. Maybe 'Absolute Eighties' if I have had a bit of a drink. [Puts her hand on the pan to see if it is hot enough.]

You just used your hand to see if it is hot enough?

Yes, just to check the temperature. I don't like crispy eggs...and I am a very touchy-feely person. So I am noticing as well that the eggs, the lining underneath the shell is much, much thicker than a chicken egg, so it is quite tough.

When I am in the kitchen, I am not into recipes. I think that it's a bit more intuitive and I think that you are always testing, feeling and seeing if things are ready...That's important.

Do you like your yolk runny?

Sorry I can't stay to eat with you, but I look forward to watching the photos on your blog.

Oh, good. You might see them in a few days time. Who knows...

How long does it take to upload a new post [on your web blog]?

It varies. It depends on how enthusiastic I am feeling. Sometimes it can just be, make it that night for dinner, write it, it can be just an hour or 2. If I'm making a little more effort with my dinner it could be take longer. I have few photos already on my computer I haven't done as a blog yet but I that I could use. And what I've also done, which was recommended, was have some blogs already written, so if you are feeling kind of you don't want to do it... because it should be something you want to do, rather than feeling it is something that you have to do...

How much do you think of the future of the kitchen? How do you imagine it? Do you think everything will be affected by technology?

I suppose I can see it going one of two ways. I think there is a big movement towards kind of 'real food', farmers' market food and honest food, so I could see maybe the home becoming more important. And kitchens becoming a much more sociable area, like maybe back in the fifties or something like that and people making more effort with their food rather than just making ready meals and things like that all time. But maybe it'll go the other way as well. Maybe it'll become more sort of mechanised, more microwave things.

Some people say there wouldn't be any kitchens in flats; there is no need for having a kitchen...

I can understand that. I am always amazed when I go on holiday, like if I am in France or something like that, they produce amazing food out of a tiny space. You know, one pan and a tiny sink. I think it is possible but for me I always want a big kitchen and that comes from the feeling that food is not just sustenance but a social thing. The main criteria when we were buying this house, was somewhere that you could have your friends over and all sit together. I didn't want to be in a separate room cooking when my friends elsewhere that have come to see me. For me it has been always important, but as a society as a whole, I am not quite sure. I think people will get into that again. I think people would get fed up of you know corporate things.

What might give you more fun in your kitchen? When you think of fun, what comes to your mind?

I think [pauses] I'm not sure. I think the actual food itself makes me the happiest. I think having a farmers' market on my doorstep would be pretty special or even better than that would be to have my own vegetable patch. I want to be able to, you know, walk outside my door and have something and then eat it ten minutes later. That's ultimately I would like.

I think in terms of products, the more I am getting into cooking, the more I am appreciating the little tools that can help out. Like when I was a student I worked in the Jenner's Cookshop. It's got loads of sorts of gizmos and gadgets and things like that. I always like, 'who buys cherry stoner?'. All, you know, all these kind of little things. I couldn't see the point of that but now I am kind of changing. I'd like an ice cream maker and more Le Crouset pots and I'd like a micro cleaner. I've got one but it's not that good.

So this is my normal routine: photograph then eat.

How much are you under influence of these TV programmes, these celebrity chefs? For example, when you are watching them using specific tools for their cooking, do you think of buying it? How do you find this, describe it?

I would say I am not too influenced by it. My favourite chef is Jamie Oliver. He often uses a lot of his own bits and bobs and I think it is almost a bit funny. Like 'Oh there's that shaker again' ...

So he's got the like special tools for doing, making his salad dressings, whereas I would just use a jam jar. I don't really see the point of it. That's probably unhelpful for your project...

No, No. I am looking for these sort of differences. Your own reasons for using things.

I think a jam jar probably would work just as well and people have survived for plenty of years without having to make up a special dressing maker. You can buy so many things. I just don't know how necessary it is. I think it is that kind of consumerism. Just use the jam jar and save yourself a tenner.

These are actually the things that I am looking for because my research is a kind of criticism on consumerism as well because if you look you can see more and more products that attract you, look appealing and convince you to buy them. Why and what do we get from every day products? What makes us to look for another one? If we find something playful, my argument is that something playful can be reusable, something that you can use several times. I am looking at the term 're-playable', something that

you can play again and again. If something is not re-playable then it shouldn't be playful.

Ah, I think I kind of understand that. The things I like are in the kitchen are often memories. I like this little sugar pot and we got this in Berlin. We bought it together and it is also cool because it stops automatically.

You don't need to use a spoon.

I like this because it is functional and looks nice. I think because of the history behind it, that it had a life before.

What other instruments that you find it similar, function-wise, it means the same to you? You have similar feelings towards them?

I like these [showing me some bottles]. It is organic apple juice that comes in a glass jar you can use the jar again. We use it for flowers, keeping grains and things like that.

They look very retro.

Yeah, yeah and this just a... I like this bin. It is meant to be for gardens.

So you like it?

Yeah, it needs a clean though...definitely into retro, retro things I suppose in the kitchen. I think it's because it reminds me of maybe the time when people were a bit more bothered by things, like not eating battery chickens, where people sat down to eat together more.

Thank you R. I really appreciate your time.

<http://thetwicebitten.blogspot.co.uk/search?q=duck+eggs> [accessed 03/12/2012]

Interview with M

Do you like cooking?

Yeah, I like cooking. I don't cook much in here because I cook at work and usually I have my tea at work. I very rarely cook in my flat, so at weekends, but not very rarely in the flat. I like to cook at work.

You're probably trained for cooking...

No, I'm not. I am not the best cook in the world...a good effort. I enjoy cooking but because of my job I cook a lot of homemade meals. Normal food.

You're interested probably in healthy food?

Yeah.

What sort of food do you usually cook?

At work just a lot of like pies, like fish pies, meat, pasta. We usually have pasta once a week, a meat dish once a week, fish once. Try to keep it varied. And then sometimes on Friday I am allowed a convenience meal. But it is mostly home-cooked.

Do you usually follow recipes?

I've got a bad habit. I look at recipes and see what I need but then I add in different things. My own stuff as well.

Then you start from the recipe?

Unless it is something I've never made before I don't follow the recipe but I tend to stick to what I know and then I can try and change it. And make it a little bit better. Recipes can confuse me.

If you compare with your childhood, has your habit of eating changed? The way you cook, or your family?

When I grew up we had home-cooked meals every night. We never had junk food, proper home-cooking, so I kept that going. I have the odd takeaway like anybody else but hardly ever. I prefer cooking.

The same food the same recipes?

I suppose maybe I am quite bad for that. But then there are a lot of things that I can make. But there are lots of things I can make. So the next thing is I try to change them so that is not the same thing all the time.

At work we have got an Aga, you know. To cook on one of them is brilliant. That's when I enjoy cooking... rather than [cooking on] this [gestures towards the home cooker].

Many people have mentioned this Aga and it seems that it is more than just a cooker? What do you think?

I dry my washing on it ...I dry wet shoes, they get left beside the Aga. Once you've washed up pots and pans you can put them on top of the Aga and then it dries it ...but for cooking it's brilliant ...you can make something in the morning, like if you're making a spaghetti Bolognese on one these, you can make your Bolognese sauce in the morning, put in the oven and leave it there for the entire day, so it is great. It is good for cooking though...and they are so warm. Because they are on all the time they, like, warm the kitchen.

What else? Is it just because of functionality or you see other things, symbolic things?

I think definitely it is. If you've got an Aga it is definitely a sign of being well off isn't it. It is usually you'll find an Aga in a like big house, a big country kitchen. You probably never get a chance to come in to one of these flats and find an Aga. I think that probably would be very slim. I think they are definitely a sign of wealth.

Sure.

But obviously worth every penny I think.

So in terms of kitchen appliances what other things besides the Aga do you like and enjoy working with?

I make a lot of soups, so I use my blender. Me and my blender are never far away from each other. One of those hand-held blenders so I mean I use that a lot when I am making my soups. But it is really just the kettle for making my cups of tea.

Do you have any personal relationship to any of these things?

I've got this little grill thing [referring to a sandwich maker] I got it from my best friend when I left home, so I suppose that is a symbolic thing because it was a moving in present.

So you use it a lot?

I do use it, yeah. I've had it for like seven years or so.

You take it wherever you go?

When I leave this flat there's going to be a lot of stuff coming out of this kitchen. I don't know if the other two realise that.

So you probably spend a lot of money to buy kitchen appliances?

No. Well obviously when we moved into the flat most of the stuff was provided. I don't think I've ever bought anything. Everything's been...

So you want to buy anything particular for the kitchen?

Some dishes but apart from that no. I don't think. I mean I would love a massive fridge-freezer. That would be brilliant, but I am quite happy with my little lot in here.

So for example you go to John Lewis, what section do you usually go to and desire to have?

No, I went to John Lewis yesterday. Actually, to be honest I don't. I would never walk into John Lewis and go to the household area. Because I think it is just because I rent this flat. I don't feel the need to fill it up with anything because it is a communal kitchen, so I have no desire to go and buy new top of the range equipment. In my ideal world I would love a massive kitchen with a nice big Aga and nice big fridge-freezer and things but I'm not bothered that I haven't got that...if that makes sense.

Yes, sure. How about at work? Do you usually order things to buy? For the kitchen for cooking?

No, that's pretty much my boss just takes care of that. If something's got broken and I would say to her, this is broken and I would go and replace it, if she wants me to replace it but, no, she takes care of that. I just use everything that she puts in.

What part of cooking do you like most?

The bit when all comes together, and everything's cooked and I like the shopping for it. I like going shopping for the food I'm gonna make. If it's something easy then, and straight forward, then it's good, but I do like the end of it. I mean I hardly cook for myself. I usually cook when I have got friends coming over. I enjoy the bit at the end of it.

So you usually cook for your friends?

Occasionally, yeah. I enjoy having my friends over and have a meal together.

Do you usually try new recipes?

Em, sometimes, it depends who is coming over. If there is any vegetarians or requirements for some sort of fussy eaters...

Ok, so have you ever seen these very attractive toy-shaped utensils or kitchen appliances? At first glance they look like a toy. They are playful and have different parts and you can use them differently...

I think everything is about gadget nowadays, isn't it? I saw a programme on TV the other day and there was this coffee machine that costs 4,000 pounds or something and it has all these buttons and everything on it. I just think 'use the kettle, just use the kettle'. That's fine.

So you think they are more difficult to use and they bring complexity? What do you think?

Probably, I never use these gadgets, one or once, so I guess don't know how difficult they are to use but everything does seem to be so, like, more fancy and high-tech.

So you don't approve it or like it?

I don't say I don't approve of it. I am sure if I had the money to buy it maybe I would buy it, but I am happy with just simple.

Then do you think if you had such a thing cooking would be easier, more pleasurable?

I think cooking is only easier if you can cook. I mean you can have all the gadgets in the world if you're gonna burn a tin of beans then you're a rubbish cook, aren't you? No I think you can have all the gadgets in the world and if can't cook, then you can't cook.

Very interesting.

I've managed to prepare good enough meals just well on the gas cooker then I don't need...

Then you just enjoy cooking?

Yeah, Yeah, I think you just get out of it what you put in. if you enjoy cooking and you can cook then it's good fun. And if you are a rubbish cook but you've got all the gadgets then you're not going to get anything out of it.

So what would be a challenge for you in cooking? For example some people they are not very comfortable in making bread or cakes or, I don't know, foreign food, oriental food...what about you?

I think I would love to be able to make really nice oriental food, make a really nice Thai meal but I think it just the ingredients that scare me rather than the actual preparing. By the time you buy everything and then...No, I think that would be quite nice, I've never tried to make bread before and I don't know if I could do that but I'd certainly try. See I suppose I probably in the case that I had one of those bread machine I would probably make my own bread but I don't have bread machine so I am not gonna make it.

You wouldn't try in the oven?

No, probably not.

Why?

Because it seems a lot more hassle and more difficult, but I've seen people use those bread machines and it does seem like a case of mixing it up and then putting it in the bread machine, but I think if you put it in the oven obviously it takes a lot of time and is probably a bit more complicated.

I think if I had my own ice-cream maker then maybe I'd make my own ice-cream but I don't so I won't.

My mum used to make ice cream. The outcome was totally different from what you get from shops, these readymade ones. But a lot of hassle.

I like to watch a lot of these cookery programmes and they make ice cream and they just pour it in one of those machines. I suppose it is similar to a bread maker, isn't it? You pour in it and la la! ...it is done.

So, do you usually listen to the radio?

I usually have the radio on whenever I am in the kitchen. I have I like to have radio on all the time.

Which channel do you listen to? Music or news?

Yeah, Radio One and then once I am sitting at the table to have my meal then I'll put the radio off and pop the TV on.

Ok. Just to watch.

I like to have that background.

Ok, interesting I saw this (flower)...

I think it was in the flat, or it appeared one day.

Who takes care of that?

I don't know. I water it every now and then. Maybe A does have time for it. It just seems to not grow. It seems like to stay like that, I don't know.

Do you like having plants in the kitchen?

Honestly, it doesn't bother me. It's there. It just feels like part of the furniture.

If I ask you to show me, for example, three things that you really like, what would these three things be?

Well...I like my radio because I always have my radio on. The kettle because it makes me my cups of tea. And I suppose I like the cooker because whenever I want to cook, I can cook. I suppose the washing machine is quite handy.

You don't have a dishwasher!

No, no. We use our own hands.

How about the microwave?

It's there. I never buy microwave meals so I never have to use it. If I'm using it, it is warming through a wrap or something. It's never run for any length of time.

Do you sometimes eat with your flatmates?

No.

If you want to compare yourself with the whole of British food culture, how do you describe yourself? The differences? How much you are affected?

Well. I think very much nowadays it is all about convenience food...a lot of the time. A lot of people are rushing about everywhere and don't have time to cook, which is quite sad. I am in a position that I do have time to cook so I feel lucky because I couldn't live off ready meals every night so...

If you want to compare your way of cooking to the way they [your friends] cook?

I think everybody is the same. Most of my friends we all enjoy cooking and we all go to each other's houses for a meal and it is always proper home-cooked.

Thanks very much M.

Interview with G

What are you looking for?

There is a tool for slicing. Ah here it is...for slicing the potatoes. It makes it much easier. I think it needs to wash.

Do you cook very regularly?

Yeah, quite a lot, nothing too fancy.

Just cut it a little bit [she cut her finger].

Sorry.

Oh no no, I just cut it very slightly. I try to cook a lot but actually it depends when erm I have time. We try now in the flat to cook together more so one person does one night and you come home something is there, because I am out a lot in the evenings so you don't always have time to do it yourself.

I prefer ... I don't like to have ready meals. I don't like it at all. You kind of have to cook if you like that. You don't have a choice.

OK. Can I just get started? So frying pan... I think this is the best one.

*[She read the recipe carefully, looks for the pan lid, checks it with the pan and puts it aside.]
So is this the right amount of potatoes?*

I have no idea.

The only thing is all the knives in this house are terrible. We don't have really sharp knives.

Oh, you have many of them. I thought they are good.

[Nodding her head] They are all from IKEA and they're just terrible. So that would be one thing... maybe for Christmas I'll ask for knives. It is not nice to gift someone; you know...like...my grandma was asking me what I want.

One of my informants, participants, she had a ceramic knife. It wasn't metal it was ceramic and very sharp, very sharp.

I have never seen that before.

What do you usually cook, what kind of food?

I do a lot of pasta, just simple sauces, quite simple things usually. It is nothing too complex. I like to cook curries but I am not good at it. A lot of meats. Depends. One of my favourite meals is meatballs. I like to do spaghetti meatballs and things like that, but it kind of depends what I have time for.

How, when do you learn to cook?

Most of it I learned at home. My dad cooks a lot. My mum taught me some things as well. We tend to do big kind of stew things like Chili Con Carnie, Spaghetti Bolognese. When you put everything in a pot and stew it for a long time. We used to do it a lot at home. I'd stand up and watch while they were doing things. And my grandparents as well. And then some things you pick up on TV, when they have cooking shows.

Do you watch many of them? Do you have any favourites?

Well...I don't have a TV at the moment. We have a TV [set] but it is not connected. So I have not watched it for a while but I quite like Jamie Oliver, I used to watch his things, and Gordon Ramsey. The kind of channel 4 guys. They're quite good and have quite good ideas. There is a guy actually, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall. He lives really close to my parents, where they live in England, so I watch that sometimes. You see sometimes the local shop and things like that. It's nice.

There is a new peeler. [She uses the peeler I gave her as a gift.] We have some but they are all rubbish.

Do you buy things for this kitchen sometimes? Or are they all...

Some of the stuff I had myself before I lived here. I had a set of pans, like saucepans and a frying pan. So I bought a lot of that stuff. And then some of it was here already. In the flat we don't have an inventory, I think it is just what people left. It is not really owned by the landlady. It is just what people left over the years. So some of it is pretty bad. We have got loads of saucepans. Loads and loads and loads. Because people just leave them here. They are all rubbish. But...

I think it is the same with my flat.

Yeah, people just leave their stuff when they move out. So some of it's good. [Searches among the onions, and checks the recipe]. One. Yeah, one.

I put more to mix you up [laughs].

It is a funny looking potato...

But we have bought more stuff for the flat. Because now the people who are now living here they are going to stay longer, so that would be nice.

People actually have different approaches and attitudes. For example, I feel always I am here temporarily. I don't want to stay [to buy stuff for my flat] but my new flatmate, in the first week [she moved] she went to IKEA and bought a lot of boxes for everything. So now everything has a box in her cupboard, not generally, but for herself. I think she is very disciplined and bought many things that I wouldn't for this short term stay.

I mean I am quite fussy about my house. I always used to be. But I lived in a lot of different situations in Edinburgh. They made me relax a lot. If I didn't have something I'd say ok it is not important.

When I came to this flat it wasn't very nice. But the people all changed so now it is a bit of home. Before the guys were students so they didn't care too much about the house. I think if you are a student maybe you don't see it as a home so much, you just see it as a place.

Yes, it is true.

This is much more a home now. We are trying to get a cat. That's the next thing.

So you would get rid of mice?

Yeah, well. I think you end up...you probably see more mice with a cat, because they bring them to you, like as a present. 'Here you go! Here is a dead mouse'. But yeah, in the winter you start to hear them more, but they might stay away from flats where you have a cat because they can smell it so they stay away. I've never had mouse eating my food. If that happened I would be really upset. If you find your bread with a little mouse marks on it...

Once I saw on one of the potatoes they made a hole. Bit it in a circle, like an engineering thing, in a very round, accurate circle.

No, No, No.

I felt so awful.

That would really upset me if I saw them eating my food. I know they are around the house sometimes but they don't get into the cupboards so it's ok.

Here is so noisy!

Is it sharp enough?

Yes, it is very good. The potatoes look really nice.

So you like curries?

I do. I don't think I have the patience for it, though. I always want it to be done straightaway and I know you have to kind of give it some time. So it is a bit frustrating. But I try. One of the...the Spanish flatmate I have is a chef, and he works for a Japanese restaurant, so they do a lot of curries, Japanese curries, and they are really good. So it is a bit of a mixture of things.

It is strange, a Spanish guy living in Edinburgh, working in a Japanese restaurant!

Yeah, He loves it. Very international.

Does he cook at home?

Yeah, a lot.

Because I heard most of these cooks and chefs, they don't cook at home...

I've known people like that. I knew a chef he worked in a really nice restaurant, really, really nice. And he said to me at the weekends he would eat, you know, those burgers that you can buy in a packet that you could put in a microwave. He said he would eat them at the weekend. Because in the evenings and things when you finish work because he could not be bothered anymore when he was finished.

They look at it as a profession not as a skill.

Yeah, yeah, which is strange because he loves food as well. But he just didn't have the energy for it. I think the hours are quite unsociable as well. So you are maybe finishing work really late and you don't have time after that.

Do you cook for your friends often?

Not that often. I do a few... There's been a few times in the past couple of months that I had a big group of people over, maybe twenty-five, thirty people, and I cooked a meal then but it was not...some beautiful food I made. It was more like this is something to fill you up so you won't be hungry anymore. So we did like a big chili, a big vegetarian chili and a big meat chili. Just to get people fed.

Not "Dine With Me" sort of...!

Yeah, definitely not. Everyone just sharing plates... 'it is my time to eat now, I am picking my plate and I'll come back'. I would like to have more people over for dinner but it is just energy. It can be so easy just to meet people up in a pub and just go for a drink instead.

How about when you were at home with your parents? Did you have a big kitchen or...?

Yeah, the kitchen in my parents' house is really nice and big with a gas stove and everything, which is my favourite. Ever since we moved to Edinburgh we had an electric...a gas stove is quite different.

They work a lot during the week. So during the week they tend to make something and then freeze it and then just reheat it, like chili and Spaghetti Bolognese or something like that. And then at the weekend my mum would cook a lot. Normally, it was my dad in the week but at the weekend my mum would cook. It was quite the opposite of traditional in my house. My dad is the one who does most housework and my mum earns more money and works more hours and stuff.

It's nice though. It was really good. My dad is a good cook. He loves it. My mum likes to get her opportunity as well when she can. She gets more experimental; she tries things she has seen in magazines and on TV. I am going home next weekend so she said to me you have to tell me what you want for the weekend. She is gonna go to the butcher and get lots of meat in, which is nice.

Ok. I haven't actually used this before... But I watched him using it before. So maybe this is not good for your study but it is going to make it a lot easier for me.

But at least [it is clear] you try and show some interest in the [using] something new, which is interesting.

For this recipe, I know he [flatmate X, who is a chef in a Japanese restaurant in Edinburgh] would use it. It takes a lot of time out and makes it a lot easier. So I am gonna do that.

Or maybe you want more accurate shapes?

Yeah, I think it is so hard to get it so thin as well when you're slicing it with a knife. I think I won't get it quite so thin.

When you cook, how do you usually entertain yourself? How do you usually cook, for example?

I would usually...if no one is home to talk to...because usually I would just stand and talk with my flatmates, but if no one is home we have a speaker here in the corner that we put some music on and I just stand and listen to some music or have the news on my computer, generally. But I prefer to have someone to talk to than stand with music. But you know it depends, it depends who you are talking to as well, not every time but usually I bring my computer, maybe put it on top of the fridge there and just have some music in the background or a TV programme or something.

So you don't like silence?

Not so much. Not so much. Sometimes I stand and sing to myself if I have nothing else. I would get a bit bored if it was just in silence. I think it happens a lot. Especially in the morning when I am making breakfast or something, it just be eugh, eugh, I won't have anything on the background and just stand and wait for something but then you are half asleep and you don't realise what is going on.

This is making it so much easier [referring to the slicer]. It is great.

X is gonna laugh so much when I tell him I made it onto You Tube [laughs].

You won't be on You Tube don't worry.

You have to write down on the consent form if I'll be on You Tube.

It is just for research, don't worry.

It seems like it is a lot of potatoes.

I don't know how much it says.

It says 270 grams. I think it is a bit more than that.

You don't have scales?

No, we don't. I can do a lot of stuff by eye. It depends what it is. I used to work as a cheesemonger. So I was quite used to guessing how much something would weigh, when it was cheese...it is different for something like potatoes. It is not the same, but usually I just do everything by eye. [One of her flatmates arrives.]

You don't have a microwave?

No we don't have one. We would not have space for one. I don't know where we would put one. Ehm...we just kind of doing do without. There is some things I would like it for, like popcorn. I love popcorn. I used to eat a lot when I had a microwave but you can do it in a pan as well but it is a lot easier just to do it in a microwave. And sometimes reheating things is much quicker and easier in the microwave but I don't really miss it too much. I don't really use it for many things.

I didn't notice until you mentioned it.

It is just we don't have space at all. That's the problem. In a bigger kitchen maybe I would have one but now we don't use it ever, so...

So if you plan your own flat or choice will you go for a bigger kitchen, a more central kind of kitchen?

Yeah, I would much prefer a bigger kitchen when you could eat in the kitchen as well, because I prefer to spend a bit more time in here and while you're cooking you can have things going on, as while in her you just have to stand and cook and then go. There's no real space to sit and eat in here. You have to a kind of sit on the sofa and things. The flat is such a mess as well. Like the table over there is awful. So it can be a bit of a problem. Yeah we'd definitely have much bigger kitchen space and smaller something else than what we have. The problem with this cooker is it takes forever to cool down. So you can't control it at all.

Yeah I know I have the same.

[Contemplates the next stage while cooling down the potatoes]

What kind of activities do you like most when you cook or which part of cooking do you enjoy more?

I prefer frying things at the start. When you put everything in and get it all going and the smells comes out and everything. That's really fun. I don't like standing, chopping stuff. I don't mind. You see when I have everything ready to go, ingredients chopped and everything is ready, it is great. No problem when I have everything ready to go or when everything is processed and everything.

Do you think the way you cook is influenced by your parents or do you have your own style?

I think so. I used to cook a lot for my parents when they were working and so they would tell me what to do, and I always had this issue with my ex-partner when we were cooking together or he was cooking something that I normally cooked...he would say to me 'how much of that?' or 'how long does this need?' I never did that. I always just [showing putting stuff randomly] some of that some of that and he liked...I think he was trying to follow what I wanted, oh [imitating his voice] 'I need to know what it is, how much it is' and [her reaction towards him] 'I don't know'... 'some'... 'See what it tastes like'.

You are following your intuition

Yeah. I don't think I have a good intuition because sometimes you taste something and it is like... 'augh that shouldn't be like that' and it is not like having the fear of maybe messing it up. More 'Oh, well as long as you can eat it, it is fine'. So just be a bit relaxed about that.

If you compare your cooking with your friends, do you cook similarly?

No, I think the type of food people cook is quite different. N, for example, he is cooking quinoa, which is this, like, grain thing that I would never cook with, 'cause I don't know really what it is, so we cook quite different things but I think the way we do things is pretty similar. I mean we always...we don't use the oven at all. I can't remember the last time we used the oven. Sometimes to finish something off. The guys are the same. We usually use the top here. Maybe, you know, if you get something like pizza we put it in the oven, butt we don't really cook with it and I don't really bake very much.

You don't have time!

If you can buy something that taste so good then you don't really have to. But I think generally we are quite similar with it. He cooks at work so it is a bit different. He cooks a lot more sort of Spanish things...

I meant friends who you grew up with, like school friends, those you are in touch with [for example]?

I think it is quite similar. I think some people tend to eat more, like, ready meal stuff, maybe a bit more often than I do. Because we never really had it at home so...it doesn't taste very good to me. But they wouldn't mind it so much.

I think I tend to do things that are a little bit, you know, recipes that are more international rather sticking to British stuff. Most of the things I cook aren't really British food. Some things I do, but not very often. It depends. I mean most of the guys I know, they tended to be, to do more...One of the things I noticed was that they tended to put a lot of cream in everything. Have, like, really creamy sauces and things and I really didn't like it. I sometimes dreaded them cooking for me [pulls some facial expressions] but then with my friends at school and things, there were English so they would have a slightly different take on things than my parents. Yeah, it was just a bit different, they were quite traditional and had roast dinners all the time and stuff. They were quite different. I never really thought about it before, to be honest.

If you see a new recipe do you try it?

Not usually. I see a lot of things all the time and go 'oh that looks nice' but I very, rarely try it. Even if there's things I like the look of I very rarely bother. But I have always wanted...I don't cook much fish...I have always wanted to try more recipes for fish but I just never do. It is something I keep meaning to do all the time but it never changes. That's one that I know. I am not very adventurous and I get a bit nervous about it. I don't know why, because it's very

easy from what everyone says to me. 'Yeah, fish is easy peasy, no problem'. But it is something in my mind, 'I can't do it. I can't do it'. Would you like some more tea?

No, thank you.

I might have a glass of wine...

How about kitchen appliances? Which is more important to you? You mentioned knives. You are caution about them but other stuff in the kitchen you use a lot and think is important?

I don't know what we don't have. A lot of stuff, like measuring jugs and scales, to know, so for example today where I was cooking here I didn't know how much because I don't have scale. But one of the hassles with them, I've had scales before in the house and they just never get cleaned or something. It's so much of hassle, you use it, put in, clean it, put something else in and it is a bit of hassle, so I tend to just go by eye and then make a mess with it. One of the reasons I don't bake so much, you know, is because you need to do that with baking. Like measuring jugs and things. We don't really have good containers for stuff. I've got a lot of plastic boxes now for leftovers and things like that, but that's something I've only just got, I didn't have it before. So it is a kind of...that was one of the things that was a hassle. Chopping boards as well...I've got one big chopping board and it is a big wooden thing so every time I need to wash it, it is quite an effort and takes a lot of space. I've seen some very cool ones you can get, that you kind of stand up the sides and pour it in and stuff like that. Wow, I like to have one of those.

So you pay attention to catalogues or when you go out you look at things like this?

Yeah, I would look in shops. I don't have catalogues. I don't get them delivered here. But I would probably look at them if I got them in. You know those ones with cleaning things you used to get? Catalogues with lots of little gadgety things? I used to look at that but we don't get it here for some reason but I look in sort of shops with kitchen appliances.

Then you go to kitchen appliances section [at stores]?

Yeah 'cool', 'that looks good' and usually you know a lot of things I look at and think 'wow that is cool', it is a lot of stuff for baking and things like that and I would probably never use it. Like, 'ooh, that is really fun'.

Did you gift someone something like that?

Not so much, no. Maybe for someone...I am always concerned with things like, that no matter how useful it would be or how great it would be, if you give a woman a kitchen gadget that she is going to take it as offence. You know like, 'why are you saying I need a kitchen gadgets, especially for someone like my mum, she would be like, 'you are buying me this kitchen stuff for my birthday? Come on! '. You know, she wants perfume or something, so I wouldn't necessary buy...maybe for my sister.

[How about] For guys? Maybe?

Yeah, maybe.

But you have never done this?

No, I think I bought something for my sister before but I never wouldn't...I haven't bought it for a man before. I probably would for my dad. He probably would really like it but it is not something I would think about as a gift. You know, maybe I should more. People like this stuff. There is a really good shop near where my parents live and they have loads of really fun kitchen stuff. We go in there a lot. Sometimes they buy things for me. Like a little gift or

something. But it is not very often. Just small things usually. Last time I went to see my mum, my mum bought me a thing for making vinaigrettes. So it is a little measuring thing and it had different recipes on the side of it for different combinations so you can measure it up. But when I got home the lid wasn't on it. So it was good and we used it but the whole point was you put the lid on and shake it all up and it didn't have the lid I didn't want to go hundreds of mile to get a new one. So it just didn't get used.

If you go back to your childhood and compare it to now, has the general idea of the kitchen has changed? From that time to now in Britain?

I don't think it has so much in my lifetime because I think those things were already changing, but certainly I had, maybe not so much myself because things were a bit different with my family, but for a lot of people things were already quite changed by the time we were growing up. People would eat in the living room watching TV, rather than sitting at the table or you wouldn't have a lot of ready meals and maybe you wouldn't cook for the family every single night. You would just have something like a ready meal. I know a lot of my friends would always have something they would just buy from M&S on the way home and that was their dinner. Things were a little bit different with us because me and my sister used to prepare a lot of the food and then once my parents came home from work we all ate together. So they were a little bit different I think from the usual, but definitely.

Do you consider something negative has happened?

I think it is in some ways. I think it is good to...it depends what you are doing really. If you are just sitting and watching TV and not talking to each other, it is really negative for the whole family and I also worry about the types of food you are eating as well. I can't stand ready meals because they taste horrible. They are not very good for you either. They are really not and when you're just sitting...it is not really good. I like, I prefer to know, even if the food I am making is not amazing and super special, but at least I know what is in it. Then it is ok. But erm I don't like the idea of having something that has been so processed and things like that. I think it is really affecting your health. I remember my mum talking about how, in the early 80s just before she had my sister, that people would talk about, 'oh, you never need to cook again'. It's like this revolution about ready meals and how easy it was for people and how good a thing it was, but actually now they've started to realise the negative impact of it more, and to say it is not actually good for you and it is affecting you a lot. I know it is a bit pushed now, in the past few years, to change that back.

But how do they want to change it?

I think to encourage more people to cook because I feel there is a bit, you know, that there are lots of people my age who wouldn't know where to begin to cooking. I am not particularly a good cook. I don't know how to make lots of things but I know how to cook and I know how to feed myself. Maybe you could bring a different recipe and I wouldn't really know what to do but I could have a go. Whereas I know so many women who would say to me 'I can't cook'. And you think well, no, of course you can. When I started at the University, we were all 18 and there was a girl who didn't really know how to boil pasta and it is such a simple thing, but no, it wasn't that she was stupid or she didn't want to do it but no one told her, 'do that' and I think its because my parents asked us to do a lot stuff around the house, we just picked it up. I don't remember them ever sort of teaching me things, it was more just passed on. You just kind of got used to do it and...I guess having confidence about it as well 'cause a lot of people, if they really thought about they would know what to do but they have got it in their head that they can't do it. So it is difficult but I think teaching people how to cook and how to have confidence with it is the best start for that... you see on TV they have all these

campaigns, like, trying to teach people how to cook again and I think maybe it is working to some extent but at the same time if people are lazy about, it then they are not going to do it. And also if you look at the price of food I think that's one of the factors that isn't always thought about but if you go to these supermarkets, the frozen supermarkets, like Farmfoods and things like that, you can get loads of quantity of food for very cheap but if you would do the same in fruit and veg you don't get very much.

It is very surprising because in my country frozen and cans are quite expensive and more expensive than fresh food. They have extra processing so why are they so cheap?

I think the scale of it. It is everywhere and that was a real post-war thing in Britain as well, like using cans and things like that and I think it just really took hold. People were really up for it. Even though I say I don't eat readymade foods so much, I would still have a can of soup, when I could just as easily make myself, but for some reason for soup I think OK that 's fine. I just thought about that ...I do eat canned food, baked beans and things like that. I could easily get other things that would be better for me but it would take that much longer so I wouldn't bother to do it. Because it is a shame how much we seem to lost a bit of a connection there, and I think as well when you look at what is British food as well, there isn't a strong sort of identity or sense of what it is. I think a lot of stuff's got lost along the way. One of the reasons I tend to cook more pasta and things like that is because that is what I know, but there's a lot of stuff there I could be doing that I don't know how to do it. My parents were showed me how to cook these things. I think health is the main problem that I know. I think if you cook you appreciate the food more and you eat healthier. If you just rely on cheap, quick things it is not good for you.

Actually my topic is very connected to the issue of health and wellbeing, in the beginning I didn't know that much and I couldn't imagine but now I see they are very connected.

Yes, very much so. I read something I think it was in a newspaper...more people now in the world die from obesity than from starvation. It is a real change, not so much in a lot of places in the world but in Britain the mark of poverty is obesity, while you go back 60 years and the poor would be skinny.

Or healthier maybe?

Yeah, I mean, they were just living off vegetables. They didn't have any meat, anything to keep then going, but they weren't getting fat. It is amazing now how much poverty is an issue in being overweight and of course you go up and down as well. But these supermarket selling, you know, chips and turkey dippers and, like, that kind of thing, and it's so cheap.

And it is a pattern for children, children look at you and recreate these behaviours.

And if they don't know any other way to make food for themselves as well, they don't have a choice in what they eat. I am always thankful that at least I know how to cook things, but I learnt that from my parents. It is not something I thought myself.

Do you have a subject at school now?

Erm. They've always had home economics. They've called different things over the years. You would spend some time at school talking about food in a subject but it is also like...this is in England because that's where I went to school. They would have four subjects of technology, and they had woodwork, sewing and sort of clothing, that kind of thing, cookery and they had, like, design as well. So you choose between one of those and actually a lot of boys did cooking because they got to eat what they cooked. But it wasn't so much... [effective]. It is a

small part of the curriculum and I don't know how much gets taken and I think it should be...I think it was from maybe the age of 13 we started that. It is not something you would do when you are younger. I didn't choose that subject when I got the option between them and the only thing I remember doing before we chose our option, because you do a bit before you then choose, I only made flapjacks. So it was oats and some golden syrup and things like that. It wasn't like cooking a meal and I don't know how much they cooked meals. I think it was mainly baking and things like that.

Then what did you choose?

I did graphic design kind of things. It was good, but again it's quite limited what they teach you. They open to you... I think the idea of it is to show you what it is and what you could do for the future rather than teach you things there. So it was good. I enjoyed it. Then I stopped all of the arty things and focussed on the other things instead. I always felt that that was a shame at school; the fact that as you get on you have to cut out and stop doing things. Because I really enjoyed a lot, art specially,

I think we can mix it in now, it is cooked enough...that's gonna be plenty.

It smells good.

I like onion it is my favourite smell. I wasn't sure what it says about the heat. It says 'up' and then 'down' again. I don't know how my hob's gonna cope with it.

You have to put it in the oven?

No the hob, it asks you to heat the pan back up but then turn it down again and I am not sure if it is gonna work properly. We will see. It should be fine. Ok it's all mixed.

I like your bowl.

Actually it was here. One of the nice things which was here.

It must be very old.

It's all chipped and cracked and stuff.

It's strange because most of the people that say 'yes' to my research they like cooking. Did you say yes because you felt confident when she told you about this because those who are not into cooking they usually say 'no'.

Oh, Yeah, I would not say particularly that I like cooking. I don't mind it and actually when I am cooking something I like I enjoy it. But also it is not something that, you know, I would see as an interest or something like that. I think it was more like I don't mind to help doing study and have a chat. That is fine maybe because Sheda has asked me to do things like this that I think 'no, it's fine. But I can understand people who don't like to cook would maybe just 'no, no'. It's not just they don't like to cook but because they don't know how to cook. They might be quite intimidated by the idea of it, I could understand that people would be a little bit 'hmmm'...

I didn't know that in the beginning but I thought ok some of them actually are my friends. And they said 'no' and they didn't tell me the reason but now I feel most of the people that I interviewed they liked cooking so I thought maybe they don't.

I think that would certainly put you off a bit. Maybe there is that concern if you're asking them to cook something and then they do a bad job of it.

[Laugh] I will judge them!

Yeah, I think if you were asking me to cook something traditional from where you're from Iran I would be more nervous. If it's not something either of us would know then that's ok. If it is something you're really confident cooking and I wasn't and you'll be like 'ooohhh'...

We have lots of stew and rice, like Indian stew but not spicy. We don't use spices much.
Where are you from?

Iran

Ah, right, nice. I have a few Iranian friends.

Really?

Yeah, a couple of guys in Glasgow.

Yeah, there are many Iranians in Glasgow.

There's a lot of everything in Glasgow. It is very international. It is a nice place. I mean sometimes it is a thing you can find in Edinburgh as well but it depends.

It is very different.

Yeah, it is very different. It is more like communities of people in Glasgow whereas in Edinburgh it tends to be individuals.

More integrated people?

Yeah, yeah, yeah, but they don't...they're maybe here to study or something. They don't come with their family whereas in Glasgow they have families and stuff, so you get more a sense of like a community being there whereas here you see lots of individuals. People don't stay for a long time. People are here for a month and they go somewhere else.

It is true.

It makes it a nice city here, I think, when you have lots of movement with people, international people but then everyone goes as well. You get to know someone and they leave and 'oh'.

It doesn't look like X's but it will be tasty.

So there is a competition here?

Yeah, it says a palette knife. I don't have one of those. I have this though, which is probably better. Here it says you have to have patience. It is part of the recipe.

How long does it say it takes?

There is about 20 minutes.

But it takes one hour and...

Is it? No, oh, for the whole recipe? I am not sure. There is two parts of it, which take 20 minutes each, with preparation as well.

Ok then it would be all right. I gave this recipe to three people and each of them has their own style of cooking and following the recipe, which was very interesting.

Yeah, yeah, be nice to compare them all and to see which is what.

One of them actually she didn't cook because she didn't like eggs, but then I brought her some mushrooms to cook something else. And she didn't like mushrooms as well.

She didn't like either so I said cook whatever you like, so she chopped the mushrooms with hesitation.

I like eggs and mushrooms. There is not much I don't like.

It is getting formed.

It's getting there. I am just a bit concerned there are still too many potatoes but it will be fine. Because all eggs would have sunk to the bottom, maybe when we turn over...I am a bit nervous about turning it over. We will see. [Takes a plate] Yeah, it is not stuck and is fine.

What is your hobby? What do you do in your spare time?

My main sort of activity is...do you know a martial art called Capoeira? It's a Brazilian art form and it's a kind of like a martial art but it is also a bit different as well. It is not quite so aggressive and we don't hit each other so much, just sometimes. I have been doing that for about six years now.

Are you a member of club?

Yeah, Yeah, actually I teach classes at the club. I am quite involved.

Wow, fantastic!

I have been doing that for a long time and it doesn't leave much time for many other things.

Cool.

I enjoy it a lot.

So you have another face. Not [just] this cheerful, smiley face?

My biggest self-defence still is to run. I would never try any of this stuff. Sometimes we get people asking us, 'would this be good in a fight', 'no, no', 'you run, you give them your money and run away'. It has this philosophy in it, which is all about being intelligent, and it was developed by slaves living in Brazil. So they really have this mentality of, like, survival and if someone is stronger than you and you are fighting against the system you need to be smart. You don't need to fight straight up. You need to think about things and be cunning. It's really interesting. I prefer it to the idea of a lot of other things where it's a more hand-to-hand aggression. I am turning it a little bit early, I think, because I want to see if this side gonna cook. I'm scared of leaving the recipe but I am gonna do that.

Is it smaller? [Referring to the plate she uses to turn the omelette.]

It should be fine.

Fantastic!

It looks good.

Wow!

It left a wee bit there as well.

That was more than enough.

Yeah, I am chucking these away.

No we can eat them.

You think?

Yeah.

I wasn't sure the egg would be cooked.

Oh, because if eggs... Well done. You are a good cook.

[Laughs] Excellent! I think I make a lot of things that don't work as well, so sometimes you feel 'oh, ough', 'nothing goes right', 'it doesn't taste as it should do'. But I guess it is just not to be scared about it. Have a bit fun with it. As long as it's edible and it's not going to kill me it's fine, I don't mind. My dad is like that as well. He is forever comes up with ideas about the kitchen and usually it involves garlic. He just puts garlic in everything. My mum is always shouting at him, 'why there is garlic in this? There no need for it... What are you doing? But he is always coming with ideas. Sometimes my mum goes away for work or something, and he calls me and says, 'I am making this tonight. It is gonna be amazing!' It sounds ridiculous. He is cooking things like liver as well. Because he can't have that with my mum. She hates it. He cooks loads of liver.

You don't like it!

Funny, liver is something I really like the smell of cooking but I don't like the taste at all.

The texture maybe?

I don't know maybe it is the texture, I don't know but there is something about eating it I don't like, but the smell is really good.

I think they put some in haggis as well.

Yeah, liver, kidneys and lungs. It is fine. I think it is all in your head with that kind of stuff. It depends.

Ok, I think you are finished now.

Yeah.

I just stop filming [recording] and I am already finished with my questions so thank you.

You're welcome.

Interview with H

I am looking at playful practices in the kitchen. And how interactions in the kitchen have changed through the last three decades. I would like to ask you from your childhood experience, how was it? How did the kitchen look at that time? And now, if you compare it with today, what has changed?

I would say the look of the kitchen has changed. They got a lot more shiny and expensive looking. The appliances which you use cook and bake have really advanced as well since I was young.

How was it?

When I was young we didn't have a microwave. I think it was in the '80s that we started to have more microwaves, and use that for cooking. And I remember my mum had lots of pots on the stove. I would say now more kitchen use a microwave for heating meals quickly.

Food blender...

In my house we didn't tend to have a lot of appliances, even when I was growing up...erm...I think my friends' mum and dads were a lot into cooking than we were. We just had the basics: pots and pans and a kettle.

What did they have that you didn't?

All the sorts of processors, cake mixers that type of thing. Whereas we in our family just tended to make cakes in the traditional way; manually. I am sure we had an electric whisk. But nothing really exciting [laughs].

When you remember that, was it something enjoyable?

Cooking?

Yeah.

I have never really enjoyed cooking. I much prefer baking

Why you don't like cooking? When you go through your experience, why does it make you not like cooking?

I enjoy food but I much prefer somebody else makes it for me because I am lazy. I am really bad for pulling things off the cooker before it is ready because I am bored of waiting.

You are not patient.

So, baking, I love it, because when I bake cakes I can watch them rise in the oven and I feel sense of accomplishment. I enjoy social aspect of baking because people can enjoy it too, whereas cooking I find I always get myself in a tizz if I have guests and things aren't ready in time.

Feel pressure.

I feel pressured and I am much more able to bake a cake a night before and have it ready in the fridge iced for the next day. Think it's just not so much pressure.

Interesting, and do you have the experience of play in your kitchen or in your parents kitchen? Playing with things, having fun in the kitchen...

I have never really thought much about play with cooking. Cooking, for me, is always a serious business of having to get food ready. So I wouldn't say I've really played at it. I would say I had more fun with the baking side of things. Licking the bowl and the cake mixture and I don't mind washing up, stacking the dishwasher...erm...When it comes to actual enjoying being in the kitchen, I see it generally as a means to end. And I like the kitchen socially because you can have lots of people in to have a good chat so that I guess that's play in itself; to have the social aspect. I've noticed in the flat I am in as well, we have a big lounge with a big dining room table. It's beautiful but I always tend to have friends congregate in the kitchen.

So you have a big kitchen?

A big kitchen, yeah, and the kitchen is the best place for a party. It is an unsaid rule.

These things are very interesting for me because they are new things in the kitchen. It was very private and now it is not so much. How about your friends, for example, do you know any of your friends who really enjoying cooking?

My flatmate.

They have tools in the kitchen, which help? They just buy things for the kitchen and pay attention to the details, designed details?

Yeah, definitely, my flatmate, she is a really good cook and she's cooked professionally before for holidays, and she has higher measure of interest in cooking and she'll take her time over recipes and makes sure things are cooked properly to a timescale to make sure that her guests will get all fed and watered at the right time when they come in. Whereas I am much more slapdash with recipes, I make my own up. And she follows a book and she uses scales and appliances that I wouldn't ever dream of using. So yes she would be somebody who buys things for the kitchen.

So for her it's more enjoyable?

I would say so. She is more interested in it than me and I notice when I have got friends over she's always helpful when I am cooking something I am not sure of. She is the person I would ask, whereas with baking I don't feel the same need to ask.

Is it a matter of skill or...?

She probably has had more chance to refine her skills because she's cooked professionally. Whereas for me, I learned cooking from my mum. My mum is a really good cook. But it was more... I don't know if "rustic" is the right word...not so measured... with appliances.

Do you buy things for your kitchen? For example, do you go shopping to John Lewis and search for things you need?

Me personally? Never. I have no interest in it...as long as I have a kettle and some saucepans and some wooden spoons, I'll be happy, but I can understand why people go to Lakeland and spend hours. They are really interested in it. I can see why, for example, buying some of the gadgets would help and would enhance and would be fun if you were really into cooking.

But it doesn't apply to you?

No and I don't think I ever will be someone who religiously follows a recipe. I wish I was but [laughs] I don't have the attention.

Have you had the experience of going to a friend's kitchen and being attracted by something, something quirky or funny? Do you remember something like that?

Oh, that's a good question. I've been in a lot of kitchens which are lovely but there's nothing that stands to me as being "wow" and I guess that's because it's not something that I have a keen interest in. If I was a keen cook I might have noted these things more. I know my cousin, who is a really good baker, he has lots of quirky things in his kitchen for making cakes and muffins and he uses them. His kitchen is very retro.

Is he in Edinburgh?

Yes, he lives in Edinburgh. He made his brother's wedding muffins. He made rows of rows of them and he made a really good job. He is in actuary. He calculates pensions. Baking for him is a way to chill out and enjoy and he is very good at it. So he is a gadget guy.

What sort of meals do you cook for yourself?

For myself ah... I cook a lot of chicken and rice. I like veg. I like dishes which have got meat and veg in generally, and I also like Chinese food, so stir fries very occasionally in fact. And I like salmon. I cook sometimes salmon and potatoes, with green beans that type of food.

I like your type...you don't like cooking but you have taste for it.

And I like casserole.

And do you use fresh materials?

Usually, when I can. Sometimes I just open a tin of Chilli Con Carne, throw it together with potatoes. I am not a food snob. I don't have an issue with any tinned food but I also mix it up with fresh food sometimes. So a bit of both. Depends how broke I am. Sometimes I make very cheap food and other times I'll have treat and, you know, have so something pricy.

You try to make a balance?

Yes, I try to mix it a bit.

Is health a consideration?

Yes, I think the way I was brought up is to eat well and now I am in my thirties I guess I spend more time thinking about being healthy, whereas in my 20s I probably ate a lot more chips. Now I eat more rice.

At some point you need to cut that [laughs].

How about your sister? She has children. Does she cook?

She does. She cooks lots. I think mostly oven food and microwave.

Any particular experience you had in the kitchen, to wrap it up?

When I was in college a long time ago I had to do a media programme and be filmed and it was a programme where we had to pretend we were on TV... and we had to demonstrate a skill and so one of the girls in my class came to my house to my kitchen and filmed me making chocolate crispies in my mum and dad's kitchen with my stripy T-shirt in, smiling for the camera and waving.

That sounds fun. I'd like to watch it? Do you have it?

Oh no, I was 17 and very chubby.

About the changes in the kitchen generally, what's around the kitchen...any specific ideas?

I have no idea.

Do you watch TV cooking programmes?

I find cooking programmes like watching paint drying, Really boring. Because I can't eat the food so what's the point. Although, I do like Saturday kitchen on occasion, but probably just as well because it's got a series from Tuscany. And I love Tuscany. But besides that I don't generally watch TV all that much.

Thanks.

Appendix IV

Consent form (eca students)

Dear friend/interviewee [two copies of this page, one for the researcher and one for the participant]

My name is **Bahareh Jalalzadeh** and I am a PhD student in product design at eca. I am conducting an interview about the cultural aspect of product design. This interview will last approximately 15 mins. I would really appreciate your collaboration.

This involves a semi-structured interview which I will be running in three [chronological] phases. At each phase I will ask you different questions with regards to your designed object. First of all I need your permission to record this interview with my mobile phone and take some photos and videos.

If you consent to allow me to use any kind of the following cases, please place a tick in the box below. I will of course respect your right to refuse the permission in any cases.

- Permission to record your voice ☐
- Permission to take photo(s) of you ☐
- Permission to take photo(s) of your design ☐
- Permission to take videos ☐ ☐ ☐
- Permission to mention your initials ☐
- Permission to mention your complete name ☐ ☐ ☐

First name:

Second name:

Signature:

Date:

If you would like to follow up the result of my interviews and my research, please contact me by:

Mobile No. 07514948191

Office phone No. 01312216179

Email: bahareh.jalalzadeh@eca.ac.uk

Consent form (FGD and ethnographic interviews)

Dear friend

My name is **Bahareh Jalalzadeh** and I am a PhD student in product design at

Edinburgh College of Art. I am conducting these series of group discussion/video ethnography about the role of kitchen appliances in providing a pleasant and playful experience in the kitchen. Your participation is really appreciated.

Before the start, please fill the following questions:

- Gender: female ☐ male ☐
- What is your age range:
18-24 ☐ 25-34 ☐ 35-50 ☐ 51-64 ☐ 65+ ☐
- Please tick the highest level of your educational qualifications:
GCSE (Grades D to G) ☐ GCSE (Grade C or above) ☐
A level or equivalent ☐ First degree ☐ Master's degree ☐ Doctorate ☐
- Do you own the property that you are living in? Yes ☐ No ☐

If you consent to allow me to use any kind of the following cases, please place a tick in the box below. I will of course respect your right to refuse the permission in any cases.

- Permission to record your voice ☐
- Permission to take photo(s) of you ☐
- Permission to take a video of the session ☐
- Permission to mention your initials ☐

First name: _____ Second name: _____
Signature: _____ Date: _____

If you are interested to help with my future studies, please put your

email:
or telephone number:

If you would like to follow up the result of my research, please keep this part and contact me by:

Mobile No.: 07514948191

Office phone No.: 01312216179

Email: bahareh.jalalzadeh@eca.ac.uk

Bahareh Jalalzadeh, PhD student in product design at Edinburgh College of Art

Research title: Product's Identity in Our Playful Life Experience

Supervisors: Dr. Juliette MacDonald, Alex Milton and Alan Murray

Appendix V

Questionnaire form (eca students)

Participant No. ____ [This page will be filled and hold by the interviewer]

Generic information:

- **Gender:** female ☐ male ☐
- **Age range:**
- 18-25 ☐ 26-30 ☐ 31-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56+ ☐
- **Level of the educational qualifications:**
 - GCSE (Grades D to G) ☐ GCSE (Grade C or above) ☐
 - A level or equivalent ☐ First degree ☐ Master's degree ☐ Doctorate ☐

Questions:

- a. What does the product do? How do you explain the function of this product?
- b. Can you show me how this product works (or can you show me what you mean by ...)?
- c. How important is the function of the product to you? Why?
- d. Please indicate the functions of the product according to your priority in the circles below? (Diagram 1 being presented)
- e. What does your design aim to do?
- f. What do you aim to achieve by designing this product? Why?
- g. In your opinion, how do others perceive this work (Place themselves in other users' positions and explain the product, and have an example of extreme users) (Diagram 2)
- h. What makes your design different and unique from similar designs or your classmates? Why? (diagram 3)

Thank you very much for responding to this initial stage, and agreeing to participate in the next two phases.

Contact address for the next stage:

Diagram 1 [will be filled by the participant]

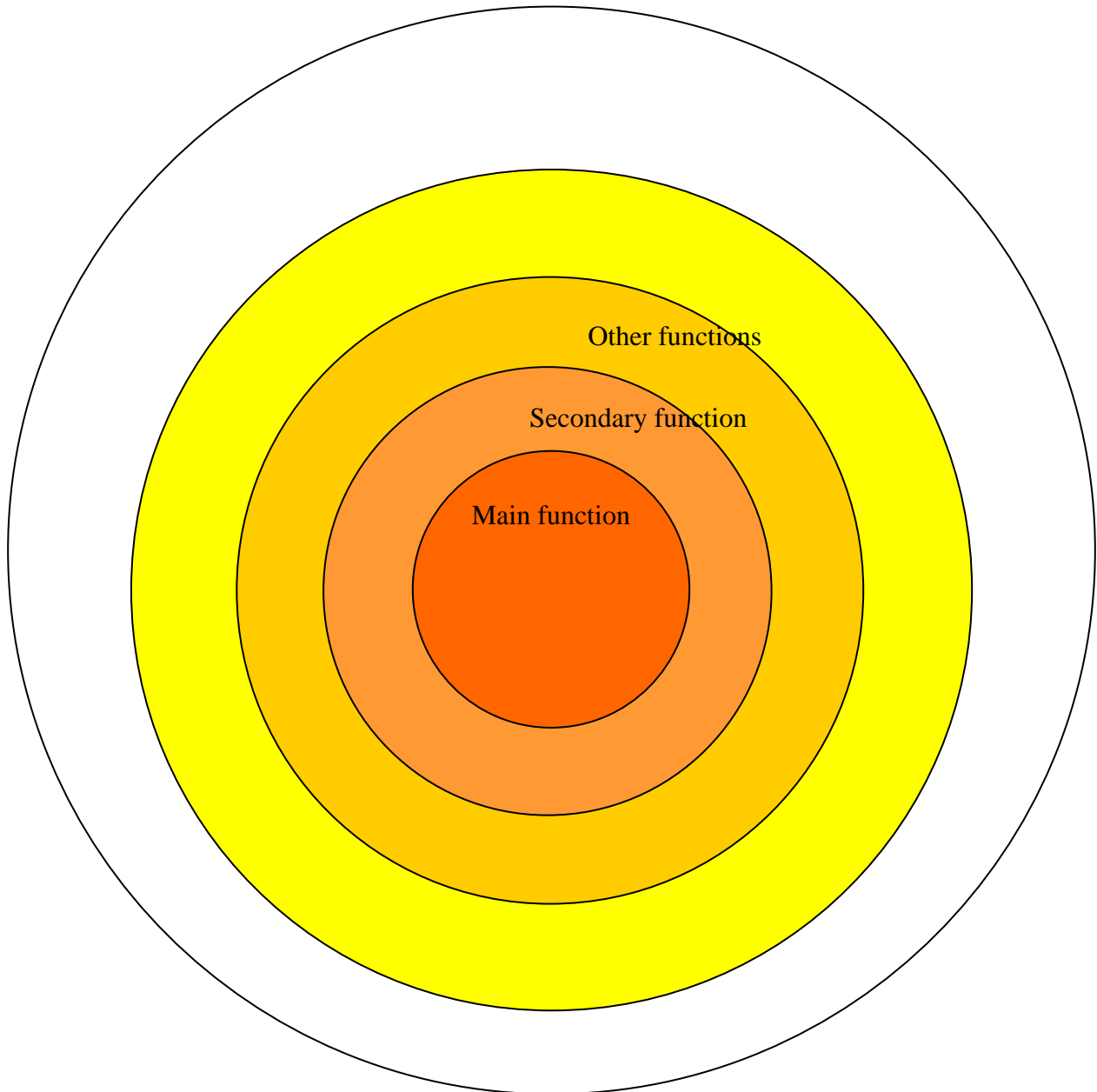


Diagram 2 [will be filled by the participant]

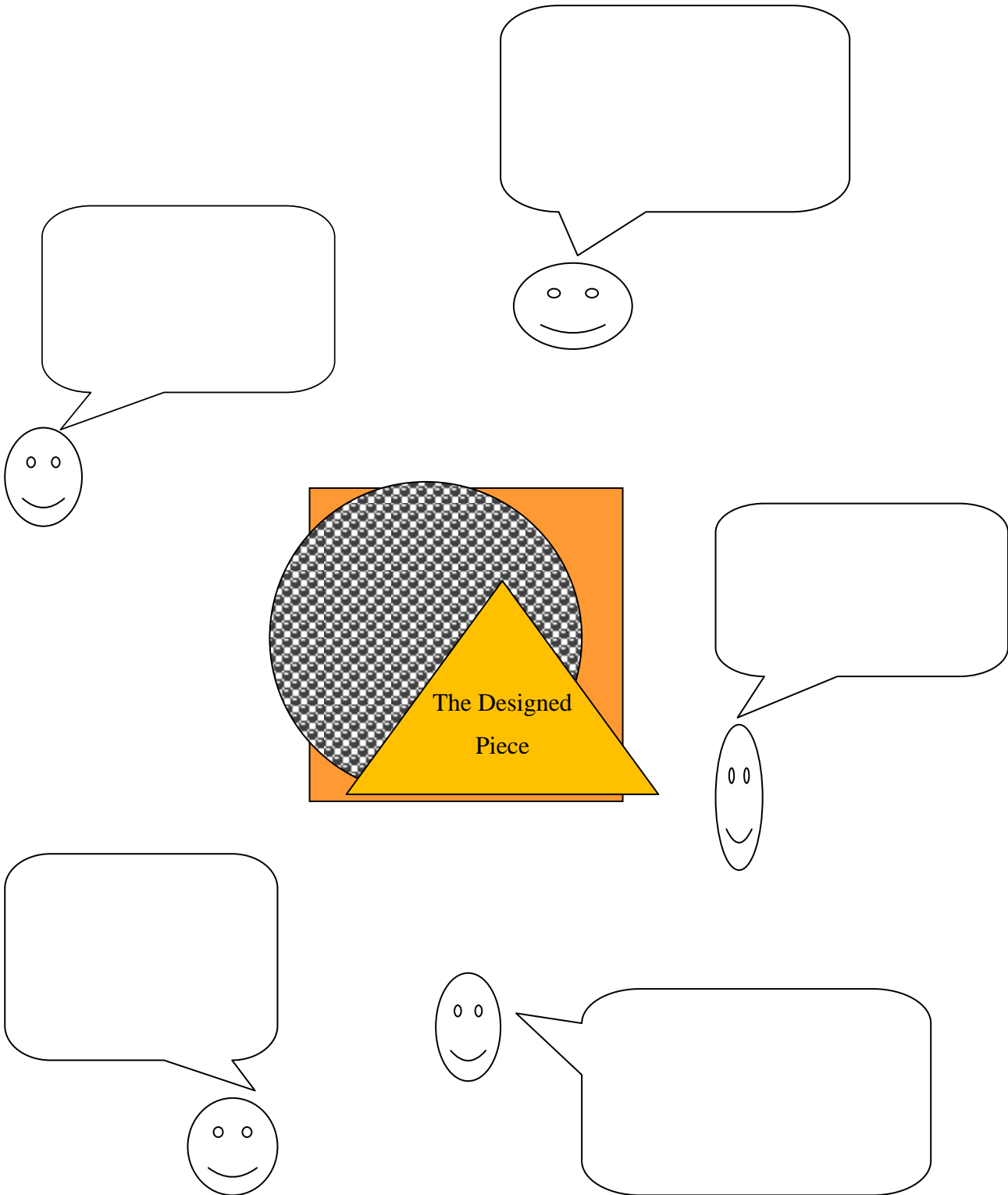


Diagram 3 [will be filled by the participant]

It is unique because

It is different because.....

Your design

It is unique because

It is different because
.....

Appendix VI

The focus group discussions' procedure:

First part- introduction

- Welcoming.
- Introduce myself.
- Introduce my study and explain why we are here (the importance of their participation).
- Review ground rules and agenda - Explanation of taping –‘the purpose of the tape recorder is to make sure I represent what was said accurately. If there is anything you would like to say but do not want it on tape, feel free to ask me to turn off the tape recorder for a moment’ - Give them the consent form and ask them to write their names, age, gender, educational level, etc and permission to contact them again.
- How information will be used (individual contribution will remain anonymous).
- There won't be any right or wrong answers. Everyone is free to express their point of view.

Second part- start

Introduce themselves by their name and how long they have been living in Edinburgh, whom they are living with, etc.

- I would like you to introduce yourself by your first name and tell me how long you have been living in Edinburgh.
- Could you please tell me whom you are living with? How many people are living in your flat?
- Could you tell me what do you do in your free time?

Third part- Introductory questions and Lifestyle - understand their cultural background.

- Some people believe the kitchen is just a ‘meal machine’ for making our food while others call it ‘heart of the house’, (Freeman, 2004) what do you think and why? See if I can figure out differences regarding
- What has been changed in the kitchens since you were in your twenties?
- Can you explain how your feeling towards the kitchen changed during these years? Even from your childhood? Can you remember any significant story that represent your feeling in that stage?
- Could you tell me the story of your kitchen? What happens everyday in your kitchen?

- Do you enjoy working in your kitchen? Why?
- In your opinion what might give you more happiness and fun in your kitchen?

Fourth part- Experience of Play

- What do you like most in your kitchen, any appliance or object? Why?
- Have you ever experienced seeing something in the kitchen which surprised you? Why?
- What might you call playful to an object in the kitchen?
- Do you have such experience in your own kitchen or in your friend's and families'?
- What do you do to reduce the burden of working in the kitchen and doing house chores?
- What objects do you usually cherish and are your favourite in the kitchen? Old one, inherent, bric-a-brac, memento, souvenirs, gifts, good functions, new brands and high tech ones, branded ones
- Have you ever experienced having a very cherished object which after a while lost its function? What do you usually do in these occasions?
- Have you ever owned something that reminds you of your childhood, something toy-shape for instance? Why? What was other's opinion? How did they react? How has that object acquired.

Fifth Part- Playability of appliances

- Do you think if something has some attributes of play then it affects its function? Why?
- Do you feel that there are conflicts between what you find playful and functional? Any example? Like what?

Sixth Part- In practice, my mugs!

- What do you think about my mugs?
- Which one do you like to have?

Seventh Part- Final

Thank you very much for your time and effort. Is there anything you would like to add to this interview?

The results of your interview will be kept with me. I will do an analysis and all the information will be kept confidentially and it will only be used for academic propose.

Appendix VII

Research ethics checklist

This code applies to all research carried out in the CHSS, whether by staff or students. The checklist should be completed by the Principal Investigator, leader of the research group, or supervisor of the student(s) involved. Those completing the checklist should ensure, wherever possible, that appropriate training and induction in research skills and ethics has been given to researchers involved prior to completion of the checklist, including reading the College's Code of Research Ethics.

This is particularly important in the case of student research projects.

If the answer to any of the questions below is 'yes', please give details of how this issue is being/will be addressed to ensure that ethical standards are maintained.

1 THE RESEARCHERS	
Your name and position	
Proposed title of research	
Funding body	
Time scale for research	
List those who will be involved in conducting the research, including names and positions (e.g. 'PhD student')	
2 RISKS TO, AND SAFETY OF, RESEARCHERS	
Those named above need appropriate training to enable them to conduct the proposed research safely and in accordance with the ethical principles set out by the College	Yes/No
Researchers are likely to be sent or go to any areas where their safety may be compromised	Yes/No
Could researchers have any conflicts of interest?	Yes/No
3 RISKS TO, AND SAFETY OF, PARTICIPANTS	
Could the research induce any psychological stress or discomfort?	Yes/No
Does the research involve any physically invasive or potentially physically harmful procedures?	Yes/No
Could this research adversely affect participants in any other way?	Yes/No
DATA PROTECTION	
Will any part of the research involve audio, film or video recording of individuals?	Yes/No
Will the research require collection of personal information from any persons without their direct consent?	Yes/No
How will the confidentiality of data, including the identity of participants (whether specifically recruited for the research or not) be ensured?	

Who will be entitled to have access to the raw data?	
How and where will the data be stored, in what format, and for how long?	
What steps have been taken to ensure that only entitled persons will have access to the data?	
How will the data be disposed of?	
How will the results of the research be used?	
What feedback of findings will be given to participants?	
Is any information likely to be passed on to external companies or organisations in the course of the research?	Yes/No
Will the project involve the transfer of personal data to countries outside the European Economic Area?	Yes/No
5 RESEARCH DESIGN	
The research involves living human subjects specifically recruited for this research project <i>If 'no', go to section 6</i>	Yes/No
How many participants will be involved in the study?	
What criteria will be used in deciding on inclusion/exclusion of participants?	
How will the sample be recruited?	
Will the study involve groups or individuals who are in custody or care, such as students at school, self help groups, residents of nursing home?	Yes/No
Will there be a control group?	Yes/No
What information will be provided to participants prior to their consent? (e.g. information leaflet, briefing session)	
Participants have a right to withdraw from the study at any time. Please tick to confirm that participants will be advised of their rights.	
Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent? (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)	Yes/No
Where consent is obtained, what steps will be taken to ensure that a written record is maintained?	
In the case of participants whose first language is not English, what arrangements are being made to ensure informed consent?	
Will participants receive any financial or other benefit from their participation?	Yes/No
Are any of the participants likely to be particularly vulnerable, such as elderly or disabled people, adults with incapacity, your own students, members of ethnic minorities, or in a professional or client relationship with the researcher?	Yes/No

Will any of the participants be under 16 years of age?	Yes/No
Do the researchers named above need to be cleared through the Disclosure/Enhanced Disclosure procedures?	Yes/No
Will any of the participants be interviewed in situations which will compromise their ability to give informed consent, such as in prison, residential care, or the care of the local authority?	Yes/No
6 EXTERNAL PROFESSIONAL BODIES	
Is the research proposal subject to scrutiny by any external body concerned with ethical approval?	Yes/No
If so, which body?	
Date approval sought	
Outcome, if known <i>or</i>	
Date outcome expected	
7 ISSUES ARISING FROM THE PROPOSAL	
In my view, ethical issues have been satisfactorily addressed, OR In my view, the ethical issues listed below arise and the following steps are being taken to address them:	
Signature Date	

8 Ethical consideration by School

The following section should be completed by the Head of School once the proposal has been considered by the School's research group.

I confirm that the proposal detailed above has received ethical approval from the School [* subject to approval by the external body named in section 6].

Signature Date

* Delete as appropriate.